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VASYL' SYMONENKO AND HIS BACKGROUND

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a dissertation entitled "Vasyl' Symonenko and His Background" submitted by Igor Peter Shankovsky in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.





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## Preface

The primary incentive in compiling data for this dissertation has been a desire to grant well-deserved credit to a young Soviet Ukrainian poet who died of cancer at the age of 28. In selecting a method of development of this topic I have decided to include information on his background and environment, without which it would be difficult to determine the proper place of this poet within the framework of Soviet Ukrainian literature.

Indeed, the excessive amount of contradictory material available on this topic and the necessity of editing and evaluating it has been one of the greatest difficulties faced by the author of this dissertation. Most of the sources dealing with contemporary Soviet Ukrainian literature are also of a highly subjective nature. Under these conditions it has been difficult to select a method for the classification of the writers discussed within the limitations of this work.

However, the facts brought out in this dissertation may indeed be of interest to the literary historian, to the researcher of Soviet literary developments, and to the sociologist.

This is also the first major work on the young poet. His name is Vasyl' Symonenko.





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## Vasyl' Symonenko within the Framework of Soviet Ukrainian Literature

Vasyl' Symonenko belongs to Soviet Ukrainian literature written and published in the USSR. This type of Ukrainian literature must be distinguished from Ukrainian emigré literature written and published in exile. If some works were written in exile and published in the USSR, they, nevertheless, do not belong to Soviet Ukrainian literature. The works of Volodymyr Vynnychenko<sup>1</sup> (1880-1951) who, while living abroad, was partly a supporter of the Soviet regime, and whose novels and dramas were published in the Soviet Ukraine during 1920s, do not belong to Soviet Ukrainian literature.

In addition to Soviet Ukrainian literature and Ukrainian emigré literature, during the period between two world wars there also existed a West Ukrainian literature, written and published on the Ukrainian territories incorporated into Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia. All these territories belong at present to the Ukrainian SSR, with the exception of some peripheral regions which still belong to Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

Works of West Ukrainian writers published between the two world wars were regarded from the Soviet point of view either

<sup>1</sup>"Vynnychenko", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, II, 371-372.





as "nationalist-bourgeois" or "progressive-proletarian". If, however, the nationalist-bourgeois writers were able to accomodate themselves to Soviet demands or were able to undergo a compulsory or voluntary "socialist reconstruction" - they are now officially counted among the Soviet Ukrainian writers.

In the most recent and the most complete source available for the investigation of the Soviet Ukrainian literary process<sup>2</sup>, West Ukrainian writer Yuri Shkrumelyak<sup>3</sup> (1895-1964) is listed among Soviet Ukrainian writers despite his "nationalist-bourgeois" past<sup>4</sup>.

The West Ukrainian writers who in the 1920s and early 1930s gathered around the publications Novi Shlachy, Vikna and Kul'tura were open admirers of the Soviet Ukraine and later went to the Ukrainian SSR, only to perish there<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Ukrains'ki pys'mennyky. Bio-bibliohrafichnyi slovnyk, I, O.I. Bilets'kyi (ed.) XI-XVIII cc., Kiev - 1960; II, Ye.P. Kyrylyuk (ed.) XIX - early XX cc., A-M, Kiev - 1963; III, P.K. Volyns'kyi XIX - early XX cc., M-Ya, Kiev - 1963; IV, L.M. Novychenko (ed.) Soviet Ukrainian writers, A-K, Kiev - 1965; V, S.A. Kryzhanivs'kyi (ed.) Soviet Ukrainian writers, M-Ya, Kiev - 1965. The first three volumes published by "Derzhavne vyd-vo Khudozhnoi Literatury"; the last two by vyd-vo Khudozhnoi Literatury "Dnipro". From here on this source will be quoted as Dictionary with indication of the volume and page number.

<sup>3</sup>Dictionary V, 779-780.

<sup>4</sup>"Shkrumelyak", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, XVI, 343.

<sup>5</sup>Volodymyr Radzykevych, Istoriya Ukrains'koi Literatury (5th ed.), III (Nova doba), vyd-vo "Bat'kivshchyna", Detroit - 1956, 122.



as "capitalist spies". Most of the writers of this group were "rehabilitated" posthumously after Stalin's death and are mentioned in Dictionary IV-V. Among them were Ivan Krushel'nyts'kyi<sup>6</sup> (1905-1934), Vasyl' Bobyns'kyi<sup>7</sup> (1898-1938) and Canadian-Ukrainian writers of similar orientation such as Myroslav Irchan<sup>8</sup> (1897-1937) and Lutsiana Piontek<sup>9</sup> (1899-1937). However, there is no separate entry in the corresponding volume of Dictionary for the "leader" of this group Antin Krushel'nyts'kyi<sup>10</sup> (1878-?<sup>11</sup>), who was a noted novelist<sup>12</sup> and perished after coming to the Ukrainian SSR.

If we are to accept the definition that Soviet Ukrainian literature is the literature written in the Ukrainian language and published in the Ukrainian SSR, some works also being written in pre-Soviet times, then we must state that Soviet Ukrainian literature is the literature of modern times (1920-1966). During this period Soviet Ukrainian literature ran a truly erratic course. To study

<sup>6</sup>Dictionary IV, 814-815.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 110-113.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 583-593.

<sup>9</sup>Dictionary V, 299-300.

<sup>10</sup>Father of Ivan Krushel'nyts'kyi, see Dictionary IV, 814-815.

<sup>11</sup>In Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, VII, 445, Antin Krushel'nyts'kyi is mentioned; in this source his date of death is quoted as November 13, 1941. However, in Volodymyr Radzykevych's Istoriya Ukrains'koi Literatury (5th ed.), III (Nova doba), vyd-vo "Bat'kivshchyna", Detroit - 1956, 122, his date of death is quoted as 1934: "liquidated along with sons".

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.







this course is to walk an endless labyrinth of contradicting sources which are scattered wide apart, their guidance quite insufficient and, more often than not - unreliable. It is expected, therefore, that if any conclusions are to be made on this course, much of it should be done in this dissertation.

Born and educated in the Ukrainian SSR, Vasyl' Symonenko preserves consciously or sub-consciously the accumulated experiences of other Soviet Ukrainian writers. Here we have to distinguish the collective experience of Soviet Ukrainian writers, the experience of Soviet Ukrainian literature, and the individual experiences of Soviet Ukrainian writers. Such a distinction should be made not only with regard to their creative activities and the various psychological attitudes which these activities must imply, but also with regard to the broad facts of the political and social history of Ukraine.

In the broad sense, Soviet Ukrainian literature has been an innovative continuation of the Ukrainian literature of the XIX and early XX centuries. Throughout the XIX and early XX centuries Ukrainian literature was the only means of expression for national ideas. Not a single Ukrainian school existed in the Tsarist Russia. Together with the theater, Ukrainian literature was the only vehicle for national ideas and also a potent instrument of education in the national spirit. In this sense the broad facts of



Ukrainian literary history are not inter-connected in various styles and genres but are morally united in the development of the national mind itself.

There is conclusive evidence of how the Ukrainian national mind reached full growth during a century. Some 120 years ago, the national prophet Taras Shevchenko<sup>13</sup> (1814-1861) preached in the desert called "Little Russia". In 1863, two years after Shevchenko's death, the Russian Minister of the Interior, Count P.O. Valuyev declared that "there never has been, there is not, and there never will be any separate 'little Russian' language"<sup>14</sup>. Russian Slavophiles, through their spokesman Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov<sup>15</sup> (1818-1887), dubbed the Ukrainian movement a "Polish intrigue". Yet in the Soviet census of 1959, 30,072,000 people in the Soviet Ukraine contested Count Valuyev's contention by declaring both their language and nationality as Ukrainian. These Ukrainians by language and nationality constituted 72% of the total population of the Ukrainian SSR<sup>16</sup>. In addition there were 2,075,000 Ukrainians who listed their nationality as Ukrainian and "other language" as their native tongue.

<sup>13</sup>Our source, Dictionary III, 609-740.

<sup>14</sup>"Valuyevs'kyi tsyrkular 1863", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, II, 207.

<sup>15</sup>"Katkov", Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia (2nd ed.), XX, 372.

<sup>16</sup>V. Kubijovyc, "The National Groups on the Ukrainian Ethnic Territory", Ukraine. A Concise Encyclopaedia, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963), I, 224.





Altogether there were 32,158,000 Ukrainians living in the Ukrainian SSR in 1959, and they contributed 76.8% of Ukraine's population<sup>17</sup>.

The urbanization of Ukraine is a very recent process, and one of its most important results is that the Ukrainians now constitute a majority in the cities of the Ukrainian SSR. Thus, in his prediction of 1863, Count Valuyev proved to be entirely wrong. He failed to foresee that restrictions imposed by him and later by the Emskii Ukaze of 1876 on Ukrainian literature<sup>18</sup>, would not only fail to stifle the Ukrainian literary revival, but would transform it into a Ukrainian movement for liberation.

In fact, the national revival in literature, culture, and political thought during the XIX and early XX centuries was the starting point in the formative process of Ukrainian nationalism. Conceived first as a feeling of distinct Ukrainian national individuality and then as an awareness of the differences between Ukraine and Russia in all major factors such as literary, historical and cultural tradition, social and economic order and religious outlook, it developed in later stages into a consciousness of belonging to Western Europe and its civilization. It must be stressed that many Ukrainian writers without distinction as to their

<sup>17</sup>V. Kubijovyc, "The National Groups on the Ukrainian Ethnic Territory", Ukraine. A Concise Encyclopaedia, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963), I, 223 and 225.

<sup>18</sup>"Ems'kyi akt 1876", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, IV, 487.





political convictions, discussed the problem of whether Ukraine belonged to Europe or to Russian Eurasia, and it is interesting to point out that both the Ukrainian Communist Mykola Khvyl'ovyi<sup>19</sup> (1893-1933) and the Ukrainian anti-communist Yurii Lypa<sup>20</sup> (1900-1944) reached the same conclusions unanimously. Both regarded "freedom-loving" and Europeanized Rus'-Ukraine and "despotic" Muscovy-Russia as two distinct worlds<sup>21</sup>.

It cannot be denied that the Revolution (1917), the Ukrainian War of Liberation (1917-1921), and the shortlived independence of the Ukrainian National Republic were powerful stimuli for the further development of the Ukrainian national mind. The very best documentation of the spirit of national and social liberation up to the present day is the famous poem "Zolotyi homin"<sup>22</sup> by the present maître of Soviet

<sup>19</sup>Dictionary does not present a separate entry for Mykola Khvyl'ovyi, as though he never existed. Probably best work covering Ukrainian literature in the 1920s and Mykola Khvyl'ovyi in the English language is by George S.N. Luckyj, Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956). On Khvyl'ovyi see: Ibid., 65-74, 82-84, 93-100, 211-213, 232-235 and passim.

<sup>20</sup>Bohdan Kravtsiv (ed., comp.), Obirvani struny. Antolohiya poezii, vyd-vo "Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka v Amerytsi", New York - 1955, 284.

<sup>21</sup>Khvyl'ovyi's views have been exhibited in the above quoted work by George S.N. Luckyj; Lypa's views in his Ukrainian works: Pryznachennya Ukrainy (1938, 1953), Chornomors'ka doktryna (1940, 1942, 1947), and Rozpodil Rosii (1941).

<sup>22</sup>Yurii Lavrinenko (ed., comp.), Rozstrilyane vidrodzhennya. Antolohiya 1917-1933, vyd-vo "Instytut Literacki", München - 1959, 22-27.



Ukrainian poetry Pavlo Tychyna<sup>23</sup> (1891-). This poem, like many other poems by Tychyna published in his two early books, Sonyashni klyarnety (1918) and Zamist' sonetiv i oktav (1920)<sup>24</sup>, will long remain the most innovative in style and most poetic and sensitive depiction of Ukraine's national revolution in literature.

The Ukrainian War of Liberation was lost, but not entirely. It forced a Soviet Russian policy in Ukraine and that policy was to acquiesce in the existence of what they have claimed to be a "sovereign and independent Ukrainian SSR". Frustrated in their ultimate goal, the Ukrainian people seemed at first to have secured a large measure of independence within the framework of Soviet Eurasia. Among other things, this measure of independence was employed in carrying on the struggle for the unfettered development of Ukrainian literature.

Though many Ukrainian writers emigrated during the Ukrainian War of Liberation (Oleksandr Oles' 1878-1944<sup>25</sup>; Mykola Voronyi 1871-1942<sup>26</sup>; Volodymyr Samiilenko

<sup>23</sup>Dictionary V, 586-619.

<sup>24</sup>Yurii Lavrinenko (ed., comp.), Rozstrilyane vidrodzhennya. Antolohiya 1917-1933, vyd-vo "Instytut Literacki", München - 1959, 15-18.

<sup>25</sup>Maksym Ryl's'kyi, "Poeziya O. Olesya", Oleksandr Oles', Poezii, vyd-vo "Biblioteka poeta. Radyans'kyi pys'mennyk", Kiev - 1964, 11.

<sup>26</sup>Bohdan Kravtsiv (ed., comp.), Obirvani struny. Antolohiya poezii, vyd-vo "Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka v Amerytsi", New York - 1955, 26.





1864-1925<sup>27</sup>; etc.), nationally-minded writers continued to dominate the Ukrainian literary scene at the time of Soviet seizure of power in Ukraine. Some of the writers exhibited Borot'bist<sup>28</sup> and Communist orientation, but their national feeling was unmistakably Ukrainian.

However the years of War Communism, connected with the constant struggle against Ukrainian insurgents in the countryside, could not provide for the development of Ukrainian literature. The struggle against Ukrainian insurrection claimed a victim from among the elder well-known Ukrainian poets, Hryhor Chuprynka<sup>29</sup> (1879-1921). He was shot in 1921 as a member of Vsepovstankom<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>28</sup>Borot'bists, called so from their party organ, Borot'ba, were left-wing Ukrainian Socialist-Revolutionaries who in the War of Liberation sided with the Bolsheviks against the Ukrainian national government. In 1920 the Borot'bists, after collision with and warfare against the Russian Communist Party, were dissolved as a unit and forced in great majority to join the KP(b)U, giving the Communist Party several able leaders, like Oleksandr Shums'kyi, Hryhorii Hryn'ko, Mykola Poloz, etc. The literary figure among the Borot'bists writers was Vasyl' Ellan-Blakytnyi (1893-1925) who played a great role in Soviet literary policies in the Soviet Ukraine. See more on that in George S.N. Luckyj, Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917-1934, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), 38-39, 59, 127, 192, 251-252, and in the Soviet source: "Borot'bysty", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, II, 54-55.

<sup>29</sup>Bohdan Kravtsiv (ed., comp.), Obirvani struny. Antolohiya poezii, vyd-vo "Naukove Tovarystvo im. Shevchenka v Amerytsi", New York - 1955, 54.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. Vsepovstankom - Central Insurgent Committee, 39 members along with Hryhor Chuprynka were executed on August 28, 1921 by the Bolsheviks.



The subsequent years of the New Economic Policy (NEP)<sup>31</sup> brought about a relaxation of the regime, and this became a powerful impetus to the development of Ukrainian literature. Not only were old groups revived (Futurists, Symbolists, Neo-classicists, etc.), but new groups were appearing in rapid succession on the literary scene<sup>32</sup>. Literary output was larger in this period than ever before, and the literary quality of many works showed at least a tendency towards bringing Ukrainian literature to a higher level. It was truly a national renaissance of arts and letters, a remarkable period in the intellectual history of Ukraine.

This renaissance was, however, doomed to destruction, for the seeds of destruction were planted within the very Ukrainian literary growth it bore. Not only was the volume of literary output larger and its quality higher and steadily growing in this period, but also the interrelation of Ukrainian literature with the increasingly complex political and social life in the USSR was becoming more and more complicated. The result was that many and painful sacrifices had to be made by Ukrainian literature. The period ended abruptly with a pogrom, and the renaissance, aptly referred

<sup>31</sup>V.A. Dyadychenko, F.Ye. Los', V.Ye. Spyts'kyi; Prof. K.K. Dubyna, Prof. I.TS. Dzyubka and Prof. F.Ye. Los' (eds.), Istoriya Ukrains'koi RSR, vyd-vo "Kyivs'koho universytetu", Kiev - 1965, 294-299.

<sup>32</sup>B.TS. Buryak and others (eds.), Istoriya Ukrains'koi Radyans'koi Literatury, vyd-vo "Naukova dumka", Kiev - 1964, 62-66, 69-83. Hereafter this source will be quoted as Istoriya with indication of page number.





to as the "fusilladed renaissance" was never to be forgotten in Ukrainian literary history<sup>33</sup>.

The Ukrainian national revival in the Soviet Ukraine was "fusilladed" by Moscow because it was considered to be a serious threat to the rising totalitarian dictatorship of Stalin and his dependence on Russian great power chauvinism and nationalism. Indeed it coincided with the general tendencies of "building socialism in one country" which led to increased party control over literature. In 1932 all literary associations were abolished and by the order of the Central Committee of the VKP(b) issued on April 23, 1932, united into one "Spilka Radyans'kykh Pys'mennykiv Ukrainy"<sup>34</sup>. Soon after this the official conformity of "socialist realism" followed and Stalin, like Lenin today, became the main topic in many a creation. A very dark period began. A.A. Zhdanov<sup>35</sup> (1896-1948) was appointed by the Communist Party to maintain overall supervision in literature and Spilka Radyans'kykh Pys'mennykiv Ukrainy became only a branch of the central Union<sup>36</sup>. The main literary features of Zhdanovshchyna in literature consisted of idealization of the Communist Party, exultations over the "socialist construction", and idealization of Stalin. Extreme chauvinism as well as xenophobia were

<sup>33</sup>Yurii Lavrinenko (ed., comp.), Rozstrilyane vidrodzhennya. Antolohiya 1917-1933, vyd-vo "Instytut Literacki", München - 1959. This work contains profiles of 40 writers and their selected works.

<sup>34</sup>Istoriya, 169.

<sup>35</sup>"Zhdanov", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, V, 47-48.

<sup>36</sup>Istoriya, 172-176.



preached, while "bourgeois-nationalist" deviations and cosmopolitanism were sharply denounced. It was during this period that Russians were proclaimed and upheld as the "elder brothers" of all Soviet peoples.

It was also during this dark period that Vasyl' Symonenko was born to a farmer's family in the village of Biivka in Poltava Province in 1935<sup>37</sup>. Almost nothing is known about his childhood, with the exception of the fact that he had lost his father in his very early childhood<sup>38</sup>.

In the meantime the drab literary reality in the Soviet Ukraine was interrupted by the Second World War and the atmosphere again became somewhat relaxed. It was during this period that Maksym Ryl's'kyi wrote his poem Zhaha, Pavlo Tychyna his "Pokhoron druha" and Volodymyr Sosyura his "Lyubit' Ukrainu"<sup>39</sup>. But in 1946 party controls were re-established by Zhdanov in an even more rigorous form. Zhdanov was joined by L. Kaganovich<sup>40</sup> in an onslaught directed not only against

<sup>37</sup>Dictionary V, 432.

<sup>38</sup>Mykola Som, "Slovo pro Vasylya Symonenka", Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 3-6.

<sup>39</sup>Dictionary does not list Sosyura's poem "Lyubit' Ukrainu", written in 1944. Sosyura was persecuted for this poem and wrote a retraction of it in Pravda. Later this was considered an abuse of the "cult of personality" and the poem itself was reinstated as "patriotic". See Stephan Kryzhaniv's'kyi, Khudozhni vidkryttya, vyd-vo "Radyans'kyi pys'mennyk", Kiev - 1965, 133.

<sup>40</sup>Istoriya, 357.





Ukrainian nationalism but also against "cosmopolitanism"<sup>41</sup>. As late as 1951 the popular Soviet Ukrainian poet Volodymyr Sosyura was denounced in the press for his love of the "eternal" Ukraine<sup>42</sup>.

Immediately after Stalin's death some works in Ukrainian literature like Oleksandr Korniiichuk's Kryla<sup>43</sup> and in Russian literature Ilya Ehrenburg's Ottepel'<sup>44</sup> aroused expectations in the West of changes in all fields of Soviet life, including, of course, literature<sup>45</sup>. It is possible that among many factors which brought about the relaxation in the USSR and the consequent "destalinization" and denunciation of the "personality cult" were the strikes and uprisings in Soviet concentration camps which occurred during 1953-1956. In at least one instance such an opinion has been supported by an impartial foreign source<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>41</sup>Istoriya, 357.

<sup>42</sup>Yurii Lavrinenko (ed., comp.), Rozstrilyane vidrodzhennya. Antolohiya 1917-1933, vyd-vo "Instytut Literacki", München - 1959, 168.

<sup>43</sup>Dictionary IV, 710.

<sup>44</sup>"Ehrenburg", Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia (2nd ed.), IL, 149.

<sup>45</sup>Vera Alexandrova, "On the Literary Front", Problems of Communism, III (July-August, 1954), 11-14; and Walter Z. Laqueur, "The 'Thaw' and After", *Ibid.*, V (January-February, 1956), 20-25.

<sup>46</sup>See Alfred Burmeister, "The Silent Reform", Encounter, VI (April, 1956), 49-52; and Herbert Passin and Fritz van Briessen, "The Strike at Norilsk", *Ibid.*, 53-64. Both articles are parts of a discussion entitled "The End of Forced Labour?" by the editors of Encounter, an organ of British liberal opinion.





In addition Moscow-directed "thaw" stirrings against the deadweights of socialist realism started to be felt in Ukraine immediately after the XX Congress in 1956<sup>47</sup>. Early in 1957 several writers like Andrii Malyshko<sup>48</sup> (1912-), Mykyta Shumylo<sup>49</sup> (1903-) and Vasyl' Shvets'<sup>50</sup> (1918-) were condemned for "deviations" and for an alleged inimical attitude to the "friendship of nations". In 1958 another wave of criticism was directed against Leonid Pervomais'kyi<sup>51</sup> (1908-), Sava Holovanivs'kyi<sup>52</sup> (1910-), Lina Kostenko<sup>53</sup> (1930-) and Vasyl' Shvets'. Finally the literature of the sixties emerged, of which Vasyl' Symonenko was an integral part. This movement will be discussed further on in this dissertation. At this point it is worthwhile noting that, being a part of All-Union cultural ferment "to broaden the horizons of socialist realism" it had, and continues to have until now, some specific Ukrainian traits. Like their predecessors in the National Revival Movement of the XIX century, the young Ukrainian intellectuals, writers of the sixties, are the spearhead of national emancipation. Being a product of the Soviet way of life, and having grown up and been educated in the communist environment, the

<sup>47</sup>"Komunistychna Partiya Ukrainy", Ukrains'ka Radyans'ka Entsyklopedia, VII, 125-127.

<sup>48</sup>Dictionary V, 68.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 800-801.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 761-762.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 262.

<sup>52</sup>Dictionary IV, 299.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 771-772.



shestydesyatnyky show a curiously strong commitment to Ukraine and Ukrainian national culture<sup>54</sup>.

Whatever its aim may be, a history of literature must above all deal properly with writers. In order to find Vasyl' Symonenko's place within the framework of Soviet Ukrainian literature, it is also necessary to present a study of the men who created this literature.

At this point the role of literature has to be stressed again. It must be pointed out that in the Soviet Ukraine, as in all other republics of the USSR, intellectuals, writers, men of the theater, in a word - cultural workers - are among the most respected members of Ukrainian society. The avidity with which literature is consumed in the Soviet Ukraine has few or no parallels in other countries. Among other things, poetry is in great demand in Ukraine and poets are among the most popular people, like the cinema artists in the West. Big crowds listen to the recitations of poetry in halls, parks, even basements; poets' autographs on their books of poetry are eagerly sought. It is truly a pity that Ukrainian poetry has almost been unknown in the West<sup>55</sup>.

My chief source for the presentation of the national

<sup>54</sup>Jaroslav Pelenski, "Recent Ukrainian Writing", Survey, 59 (April, 1966), 102-112.

<sup>55</sup>Only recently an anthology appeared in Canada, giving an outline of Ukrainian poetry. See: C.H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell (comp., trans.), The Ukrainian Poets 1189-1962, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963).





and social stratification of Soviet Ukrainian writers, has been the 5-volume Dictionary, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The last two volumes of the Dictionary, published in 1965, are devoted to Soviet Ukrainian writers. It should be noted, however, that some Ukrainian writers who started writing in the pre-Soviet period and continued their literary activities under the Soviets, are listed in the preceding volumes of the Dictionary dealing with Ukrainian literature of the XIX and early XX centuries. These are the following:

Khrysta Alchevs'ka (1882-1931), Kesar Bilylovs'kyi (1859-1934), Stepan Vasyl'chenko (1879-1932), Mykola Voronyi (1871-1942), Hryts'ko Hryhorenko (Oleksandra Kosach, 1867-1924), Dniprova Chaika (Lyudmyla Vasylevs'ka, 1861-1927), Yakiv Zharko (1861-1933), Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi (1871-1942), Olena Pchilka (Ol'ha Kosach-Drahomanova, 1849-1930), Trokhym Romanchenko (1880-1930), Volodymyr Samiilenko (1864-1925), Mykola Chernyavs'kyi (1868-1946), Antin Shablenko (1872-1930), Lyubov Yanovs'ka (1861-1933)<sup>56</sup>.

A possible reason for their exclusion from Soviet Ukrainian literature might be their "nationalistic" works, for which at least two of them, Mykola Voronyi and Ahatanhel

<sup>56</sup> All these are listed in Dictionary II or III.





Kryms'kyi<sup>57</sup> perished through measures taken by Soviet terror..

Biographies of these and many other writers included in the Dictionary show the truly tragic experiences of individual writers, unparalleled by the experiences of writers in any other country of the world with the exception perhaps of the short-lived period in Nazi Germany. The summary of these experiences, the collective experience of Soviet Ukrainian literature, has indeed been tragic. It is a miracle that on the basis of this experience a literature of the sixties could be born and a generation of poets like Vasyl' Symonenko could have appeared on the Soviet Ukrainian literary scene. This apparent miracle shows that what on the surface seems to be a totally dark age is in fact bursting through with the light of new hope.

The two volumes of the Dictionary dealing with Soviet Ukrainian writers lists 530 Ukrainian writers whom editors and compilers of the Dictionary considered contributors to the Soviet literary process. It is interesting to compare this data with other data published during Soviet times.

A Dictionary compiled by Khinkulov<sup>58</sup> in 1948 lists

<sup>57</sup>Mykola Voronyi has been mentioned in an earlier source; on Ahatanhel Kryms'kyi see: C.H. Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnell (comp., trans.), The Ukrainian Poets 1189-1962, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 270.

<sup>58</sup>Dictionary V, 694-695.



253 writers of whom only 51 were listed by Leites and Yashek<sup>59</sup> in 1927. Kylymnyk's Dovidnyk, published in 1960, lists 330 writers. Unlike Leites and Yashek, Kylymnyk had included those writing in the Russian language<sup>60</sup>.

In April 1958, Literaturna hazeta<sup>61</sup> in Kiev published an article by the editor of the last volume of Dictionary, Stepan Kryzhanivs'kyi, entitled "Pyatsot". The author stressed that at the time of his writing, the Writers' Union of the Soviet Ukraine had 500 members. The author stated also that by the end of World War II the Union had only 250 members, and that it was the smallest Union in the USSR as far as the percentage of writers in the total population of Union Republics was concerned<sup>62</sup>.

Our source listed 530 writers, but 170 listed writers died before the Dictionary was published in 1965. This leaves 360 writers living at the time of publication. If one considers the fact that the Dictionary lists only writers writing in Ukrainian, the figure for living writers (360) is considerably higher than Kylymnyk's figure of 330 writers, listed in 1960.

<sup>59</sup>See: A. Leites and M. Yashek; S. Pylypenko (ed.), Desyat' rokiiv ukrains'koi literatury, 1917-1927, I and II, vyd-vo "Instytut Tarasa Shevchenka", Kharkiv - 1929.

<sup>60</sup>See: O.V. Kylymnyk (ed.), Pys'mennyky Radyans'koi Ukrainy. Dovidnyk, vyd-vo "Radyans'kyi pys'mennyk", Kiev - 1960. Ibid., in Russian language, Kiev - 1960.

<sup>61</sup>Literaturna hazeta - now Literaturna Ukraina.

<sup>62</sup>Stepan Kryzhanivs'kyi, "Pyatsot", Literaturna hazeta, (April 25, 1958), citing Ivan Koshelivets', Suchasna literatura v URSR, vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1964, 27-28.





It proves that during the last five years many more Ukrainian writers who had fallen victim to Soviet persecution have been "rehabilitated" and restored to Soviet Ukrainian literature.

It is interesting to observe the editorial policy in omitting the Ukrainian writers from listing in the Dictionary. The following conclusions could be reached from a close investigation:

1. Along with poet Hryhor Chuprynka, already mentioned, the following pre-revolutionary writers were omitted: Mykola Filyans'kyi (1873-?), Mykola Plevako (1890-1941), Maksym Lebid' (1889-1939), Mykhailo Mohylyans'kyi (1873-?), Klym Polishchuk (1891-?) and Volodymyr Yurynets' (1891-?).

2. Representatives of the national-liberal school in Ukrainian literature who were eliminated from the Ukrainian literary process by the trial of Spilka Vyzvolennya Ukrainy (Union for Liberation of Ukraine) in 1930 were omitted. The omission includes the prominent literary scholar and academician Serhii Yefremov (1868-?), Andrii Nikovs'kyi (1885-?), Lyudmyla Staryts'ka-Chernyakhivs'ka (1868-1941), and Mykhailo Ivchenko (1890-1939).

3. Neither Mykola Khvyl'ovyi nor his followers, Ukrainian national communists, are mentioned, among them the prominent Ukrainian writers and literary critics: Yuliy Shpol (Yalovyi, 1895-1934), Kost' Burevii (Edvard Strikha, 1888-1934), Ananii Lebid' (1898-?), Roman Shevchenko (?-1934),





Andrii Richyts'kyi, and many others. Khvyl'ovyi committed suicide in 1933, others were shot or perished in Soviet concentration camps.

4. From the Novi shlahy group there is no separate entry for Antin Krushel'nyts'kyi, chief of the group and father of Ivan, as mentioned previously, and Roman Skazyns'kyi. There is the curious omission of a well-known West Ukrainian poet, Petro Karmans'kyi (1878-1956), who tried his best to submit his poetry to the demands of "socialist realism".

5. A score of writers were excluded from listing in the Dictionary for unknown reasons. For instance, Ukrainian neo-classicists Zerov and Fylypovych are listed, but the literary scholar and prominent poet Mykhailo Drai-Khmara (1889-1939) is not listed. West Ukrainian poet Ostap Luts'kyi (1883-1941) is omitted. Among prominent literary critics we do not find Borys Yakubs'kyi, there is also no mention of critics like Andrii Khvylya or Samiilo Shchupak, who were helping the Soviets to "cleanse" Ukrainian literature from nationalism. Less prominent writers like Vasyl' Atamanyuk (1897-?), Vasyl' Boiko (1892-1938), Arkadii Kazka (1890-1933), Mykhailo Lebedynets' (?-1934) and others are also omitted.

6. There is no mention of Ukrainian writers who at different times succeeded in escaping to the West, among them neo-classicist Yurii Klen (Oswald Burghardt, 1891-1947), Arkadii Lyubchenko (1899-1945), Teodosii Os'machka (1895-1962),



Ivan Bahryanyi (1907-1963), Mykhailo Orest (1901-1963), Dokiya Humenna, Oleksa Veretenchenko and many others<sup>64</sup>.

As a result of these policies and omissions from listings in the Dictionary for political reasons, it is evident that by subordinating the editorial policies to political limitations, the editors failed to show the Soviet Ukrainian literary process in its complex entirety.

Soviet censorship withheld the data from the Ukrainian reader, but they are mistaken in their belief that the young Ukrainian generation knows next to nothing about the tragedy of their predecessors. In his "Granitni obelisky..." Vasyl' Symonenko described Ukraine as "the grave-yard of fusilladed illusions, where there is no more room for graves"<sup>65</sup>.

To elucidate the national and social structure of Soviet Ukrainian writers, we divide them into f o u r generations of writers who are presently active in literature. In this we follow the initial method of Ivan Koshelivets' as

<sup>64</sup>There are many emigré sources about writers mentioned in my six categories. Soviet sources are scarce, since the "rehabilitating" process is slow and handles writers on an individual basis. Among the more outstanding works dealing with this subject are: Anthologies by Bohdan Kravtsiv and Yurii Lavrinenko mentioned previously; Yurii Luts'kyi (ed.), Lehkosynya dal'. Vaplityans'kyi zbirnyk, vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1963; "Literature" (N. Hlobenko, 'The Period Between the Two World Wars'), Ukraine. Concise Encyclopaedia, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963), I, 1043-1059, and many others. Soviet sources usually limit themselves to a foreword to the works of a rehabilitated author, where cautious remarks about his being "unjustly persecuted" can be found.

<sup>65</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 137.







presented in his recent work on Soviet Ukrainian literature<sup>66</sup>.

The f i r s t generation of writers embraces those born in the last century. They entered Ukrainian literature prior to the Ukrainian War of Liberation or at the time of it.

The s e c o n d generation of writers embraces those who were born between 1900 and 1910, and who entered Ukrainian literature in the twenties at the time of its great revival.

The t h i r d generation of writers embraces writers who were born between 1911 and 1929 and entered Ukrainian literature in the thirties, at the time of Stalin's "fusillade" of the Ukrainian literary revival.

The f o u r t h generation of writers includes all who were born in the thirties and entered Ukrainian literature in the sixties. This is the generation to which Vasyl' Symonenko belongs.

The 530 writers listed in the Dictionary are divided among the given generations as shown in Table I. The fourth-generation writer who died was Vasyl' Symonenko. He died of cancer on December 14, 1963, at the age of 28<sup>67</sup>.

It must be mentioned here that the figure of 17 writers of the fourth generation is far from complete. Even those writers who have already gained literary prominence are

<sup>66</sup>Ivan Koshelivets', Suchasna literatura v URSR, vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1964, 33-42.

<sup>67</sup>Dictionary V, 432.



TABLE I

Four Generations of Soviet Ukrainian Writers

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Living</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Total</u>
Up to 1899	35	84	119
1900-1910	125	65	190
1911-1929	184	20	204
1930 and up	16	1	17
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>530</b>



omitted. There is no mention in the Dictionary of literary critics Ivan Dzyuba and Ivan Svitlychnyi (Svitlychnyi, born in 1929 would belong to the third generation); their present predicament in the USSR has stirred world opinion. Such well-known and popular writers as Ivan Boichak, Volodymyr Drozd, Hryhorii Kyrychenko, Victor Ivanysenko, Nadiya Prykhod'ko, Vasyl' Holoborod'ko, Borys Riznychenko, Leonid Kovalenko, Mykola Synhaivs'kyi, Valerii Shevchuk, Tamara Kolomiyets' and Tamara Iovenko are also not mentioned, nor is there mention of the brilliant Russian poet Robert Tret'yakov, who writes in Ukrainian.

The Party affiliation of Soviet Ukrainian writers of different generations and their social origin are shown in Tables II and III.

One cannot fail to notice that the Party affiliation of Soviet Ukrainian writers increased with the stabilization of the Soviet regime and attained its height in the thirties and forties. It drops below average again for all years with the fourth generation of the writers.

It is interesting to note that, according to the Dictionary, Vasyl' Symonenko was not a member of the Communist Party; he is listed there only as a member of the Writers' Union of the Soviet Ukraine. On the other hand the obituary signed by a group of "friends" in Robitnycha hazeta (December 15, 1963) on page four, does list him as a Party member.





TABLE II

Party Affiliation of Soviet Ukrainian Writers

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Party members</u>	<u>Percentages</u>
Up to 1899	119	25	21%
1900-1910	190	97	51%
1911-1929	204	134	66%
1930 and up	17	8	47%
<hr/>			
Totals:	530	264	49%
<hr/>			



TABLE III

Social Origin of Soviet Ukrainian Writers

	Peasants		Workers		Intelligentsia		Total	
G. <sup>68</sup>	Absolute Figures	%%	Absolute Figures	%%	Absolute Figures	%%	No Data	
1.	57	48%	20	17%	33	30%	9	119
2.	88	46%	54	28%	40	21%	8	190
3.	107	53%	38	19%	47	24%	12	204
4.	6	33%	4	24%	6	33%	1	17
<hr/>								
Totals:	258	49%	116	22%	126	24%	30	530

<sup>68</sup>Abbreviation (G.) stands for "Generation". See Table I and Table II.





In 1959, 46.4% of the entire population in the Ukrainian SSR was urban. Back in 1926 only 19.8% of the same population was urban. The table of social origins of Soviet Ukrainian writers reflects the recent process of the urbanization of the Soviet Ukraine and its Ukrainian national character. It is interesting to note that more than half of the Soviet Ukrainian writers listed in the Dictionary came from peasant stock - a social group known to preserve national traditions in their purest form. To such a family in the Province of Poltava Vasyl' Symonenko was born in 1935.

The education of Soviet Ukrainian writers is presented in Table IV. In addition to these figures it should be added that 41 writers or 7.7% of the total held academic degree of doctor or candidate of science. This indicates the rapid increase in education, especially at the higher and secondary levels. According to the population census of 1897, merely 13.6% of all the Ukrainian population was literate. Today illiteracy has been erased completely<sup>69</sup>. This development has to be credited to the Soviet regime, but one has also to stress that positive results were attained in Ukraine by the introduction of the Ukrainian language as the language of instruction back in 1917.

<sup>69</sup>V. Kubijovyc, "The Size and Structure of the Population", Ukraine. A Concise Encyclopaedia, (Toronto: Toronto university Press, 1963), I, 178.



TABLE IV

Education of Soviet Ukrainian Writers

	Higher		Secondary	Primary	Total	
Generation	Absolute Figures	%%	Absolute Figures	Absolute Figures	No Data	
Up to 1899	63	53%	36	16	4	119
1900-1910	110	57%	51	21	8	190
1911-1929	151	75%	44	3	6	204
1930 and up	17	100%				17
Totals:	341	64%	131	40	18	530



According to the Dictionary, Vasyl' Symonenko completed his secondary education in 1952, and entered the Taras Shevchenko State University in Kiev, where he majored in journalism. During his University days he belonged to a literary circle composed of his contemporaries and wrote his first poems<sup>70</sup>. He graduated in 1957 and subsequently worked out of the provincial capital Cherkasy as a journalist. He was on the staff of Cherkas'ka pravda and Molod' Cherkashchyny up until his premature death in 1963. The aforementioned obituary in Robitnycha hazeta lists him as their correspondent.

Table V shows the national composition of Soviet Ukrainian writers. The Dictionary also lists non-Ukrainians if they are writing their works in the Ukrainian language.

Among Russians who are writing in Ukrainian there is the outstanding literary critic, Iosyp Kysel'ov. There are several Russian writers in the Ukrainian SSR who are writing in Russian; among them Victor Nekrasov has an All-Union reputation. Leonid Vyacheslavsky is noted for his translations from Ukrainian. As mentioned earlier, the gifted young Russian poet Robert Tretyakov, who writes in Ukrainian, is not listed in the Dictionary.

Among the Jews who are writing in Ukrainian there are outstanding poets, novelists, and literary critics. Poets

<sup>70</sup>Mykola Som, "Slovo pro Vasylya Symonenka", Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 3-6.





TABLE V

Nationality of Writers in the Soviet Ukraine

<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage in the number of writers</u>	<u>Percentage in the total population</u>
Ukrainians	492	92.9%	76.8%
Russians	11	2.8%	16.9%
Jews	21	3.9%	2.0%
Poles	1		0.9%
Other <sup>71</sup>	5	0.4%	3.4%
Totals:	530	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>71</sup>Other: 2 Moldavians, 1 Gypsy, 1 Greek, 1 German.



Sava Holovanivs'kyi and Leonid Pervomais'kyi acquired fame as first-class original poets and as translators into Ukrainian from western literatures. Pervomais'kyi is also noted for his prose. One of the outstanding novelists is Natan Rybak<sup>72</sup> (Fisher, 1913-). Among the outstanding literary critics of Jewish extraction are Yevhen Adel'heim, Yeremiya Aisenshtok, Mikhael Bernstein, and others. The popular poet Aron Kopshtein was killed on the front line during the Finno-Soviet War in 1940.

The next table, Table VI, shows the territorial origin of Soviet Ukrainian writers. This table is supplemented by a map showing their distribution among the provinces of the Ukrainian SSR. This indicates that the largest crop of writers was produced in the Province of Poltava. This is where Vasyl' Symonenko was born, i.e. in the province which gave modern Ukrainian literature its "father", Ivan Kotlyarevs'kyi<sup>73</sup>.

Table VII shows the experiences of Soviet Ukrainian writers in oppression and war. Of those writers who participated in World War II, 18 were members of the Red Partisan Movement and 2 were members of the Communist underground in Ukraine. Some of them held prominent posts in the Movements. Yurii Zbanats'kyi (1914-) was commander of the Shchors partizan detachment and received the title of Hero

<sup>72</sup>Dictionary V, 345.

<sup>73</sup>Dictionary II, 489-510.





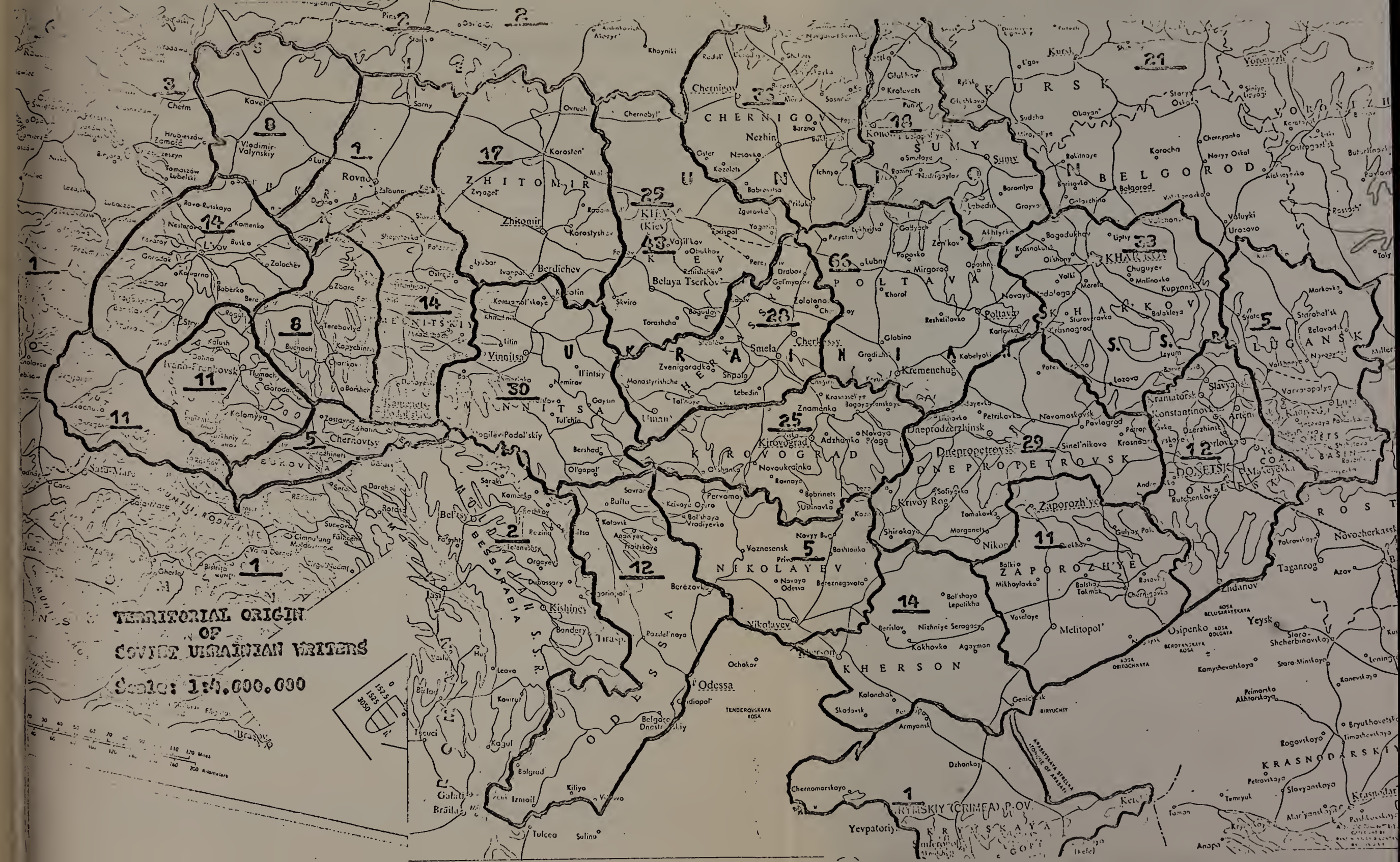
TABLE VI

Territorial Origin of Soviet Ukrainian Writers

Province or Country	Population 1959	Percentage of Ukrainians	Number of Writers
Vinnytsya	2,142	91.8%	30
Volyn'	890	94.6%	8
Dnipropetrovs'k	2,705	77.7%	29
Donets'k	4,262	55.6%	12
Zhytomyr	1,604	84.5%	17
Transkarpatiya	920	74.6%	11
Zaporozhe	1,464	68.3%	11
City of Kiev	1,104	60.1%	25
Kiev	2,823	80.3%	43
Kirovohrad	1,218	88.7%	25
Krym(Crimea)	1,201	22.3%	1
Luhans'k	2,452	57.8%	5
L'viv	2,108	86.3%	14
Mykolaiv	1,014	81.2%	5
Odessa	2,027	55.5%	12
Poltava	1,632	93.4%	66
Rivne	926	93.4%	1
Ivano-Frankivs'k	1,095	94.8%	11
Sumy	1,514	87.9%	18
Ternopil'	1,086	94.9%	8
Kharkiv	2,520	68.8%	38
Kherson'	824	81.1%	14
Khmel'nyts'kyi	1,611	90.2%	14
Cherkasy	1,503	94.0%	28
Chernihiv	1,554	94.5%	36
Chernivtsi	774	66.9%	5
Totals			
Ukrainian SSR:	41,869	76.8%	487
Lemkivshchyna			1
Polissya			2
Kholmshchyna			3
Poland			6
Belorussia			2
Russian SFSR			21
Moldavia			2
Rumania			1
Georgia			1
No Data			4
Total:			530







**TERRITORIAL ORIGIN  
OF  
SOVIET UKRAINIAN WRITERS**

**Scale: 1:4,000,000**

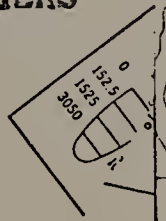
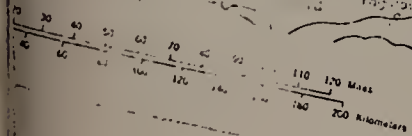






TABLE VII

Soviet Ukrainian Writers in Oppression and War

Generation	Participated in World War II	Killed in War	Shot or Per- ished in Concentration Camps	Died of Natural Causes	Total Died
Up to 1899	3	2	46	36	84
1900-1910	54	13	28	24	65
1911-1929	117	11	2	7	20
1930 and up				1	1
Totals:	174	26	76	68	170





of the Soviet Union. The writer Yakiv Bash (1908-) was a Central Staff Member of the Red Partisan Movement; Platon Voron'ko (1913-), Vasyl' Zemlyak (1923-), Petro Inhul's'kyi (1912-), Mykhailo Savchenko (1914-), Yakiv Stetsyuk (1922-), Stefan Trofymyuk (1923-), Mykola Sheremet (1906-) and Anatolii Shyyan (1906-) were commanders; and Mykhailo Khazan (1911-) was a commissar. If we accept Borys Lewytzkyj's conjecture, these were the members of the Ukrainian partisan "clan" which exercised powerful influence on Soviet politics in the post-war years<sup>74</sup>.

Of the 176 participants in World War II, 86 writers received high decorations for gallantry. This figure slightly exceeds the number of writers who were shot or who perished in the concentration camps. There were 76 Soviet writers in this category, listed in the Dictionary, who are now considered victims of the "personality cult" and have been "rehabilitated". Thus, the editors of the Dictionary placed side-by-side the "heroes" and the former "enemies of the people"!

However the figure of 76 writers who were shot or who perished in Soviet concentration camps does not include all the Soviet Ukrainian writers who suffered persecution at the hands of the Soviet security organs, who were shot or

<sup>74</sup>Borys Lewytzkyj, Die Sowjetukraine 1944-1963, (Köln-Berlin: Kipenhauer & Witsch Verlag, 1964), 72 and on.



perished in the concentration camps, or who died after their release as a consequence of disease and exhaustion. Table VIII shows a more complete computation based on bio-bibliographical materials in the Dictionary.

Thus the figure of 120 persecuted writers is still far from being complete, for the Dictionary for one reason or another does not list all the writers who were active in the Soviet Ukrainian literary process. The figure should be increased by all the writers who were persecuted, killed or silenced between 1920 and 1966 and omitted from the Dictionary. It is impossible to perform this task at the present time because too many facts and sources are not available.

At the present time several prominent Ukrainian literary figures have been living in the Soviet Ukraine since they were "rehabilitated" and released from the Soviet concentration camps. Among them are Borys Antonenko-Davydovych (1899-) and Volodymyr Gzhyts'kyi (1895-). Some have died, like the popular Ostap Vyshnya (1889-1956) and Ahapii Shamrai (1896-1952). Many of those who were killed or died in the concentration camps are now being posthumously restored to full "rights". Little do they care now about this "restoration". They are Oleksa Vlyz'ko (1908-1934), Ivan Dniprovs'kyi (1895-1934), Yevhen Pluzhnyk (1898-1938), Volodymyr Svidzins'kyi (1885-1941), Dmytro Fal'kivs'kyi (1898-1934) and others. For the Ukrainian people they will long be a personification





TABLE VIII

Persecution of Soviet Ukrainian Writers

Generation	Persecuted Writers			Total
	Living	Killed	Died	
Up to 1899	13	46	7	66
1900-1910	20	28	4	72
1911-1929		2		2
1930 and up				0
Totals:	33	76	11	120



of the individual and collective experiences of the Soviet Ukrainian literary process, which of all the unhappy chapters in Ukraine's history, including the destruction of the arts, sciences and churches, is the most unhappy.

As it will be shown in this dissertation, Vasyl' Symonenko had a deep understanding of all these experiences. Their reality has been concealed behind Soviet propaganda slogans about the flowering of Ukrainian literature under the Soviet regime. The writings of Vasyl' Symonenko give us an insight into the attitudes of the generation which in literature regards itself as the literary spokesman of the present-day Ukrainian people.

It is from this point of view that Symonenko's writings will receive the utmost attention and the fullest consideration which the narrow limits of this dissertation allows.



### The Diary - Vasyl' Symonenko About Himself

There are many methods and schools dedicated to the evaluation of literary works. Many concern themselves with interrelations between language and the "psyche" of the writer on the path to individual style, many advocate a purely linguistic approach where a number of contexts are driven under a common denominator and an author becomes a faceless by-stander bowing his head before the all-mighty computer. There is only one official school in the Soviet Union which is based on the theory of dialectical materialism. The latter is a conception of life held by the Communist Party<sup>75</sup>. There is one major issue upon which all the literary schools do agree and that is that the cultural level of a nation is best documented by its literature.

A closer look at the subject of literature will reveal a further dichotomy of a given school into a history of literature and a theory of literature. Both disciplines are correlative, both agree in general that an author should be considered and studied within the framework of his surroundings, with the exception of the school advocating a purely linguistic approach. In the words of two Western literary theoreticians: "The social allegiance, attitude, and ideology

<sup>75</sup>K.M. Storchak, Osnovy metodyky literatury, vyd-vo "Radyans'ka shkola", Kiev - 1965, 20.





of a writer can be studied not only in his writings but also, frequently, in biographical extra-literary documents. The writer has been a citizen, has pronounced on questions of social and political importance, has taken part in the issues of his time"<sup>76</sup>.

The Diary of Vasyl' Symonenko is the prime concern of this dissertation. Symonenko started his diary on September 18, 1962, and wrote the last entry on September 20, 1963<sup>77</sup>. The authenticity of The Diary was confirmed by Soviet sources<sup>78</sup>. The reasoning behind selecting Symonenko's Diary as our prime concern is clear: "The most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator, the author; and hence an explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the writer has been one of the

<sup>76</sup>Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, (New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), 97.

<sup>77</sup>The Diary of Vasyl' Symonenko was first published in Sučasnist', (January, 1965), 13-18. This Ukrainian magazine dedicated to Literature, Art, and Public life of Ukrainians abroad is published monthly in West Germany. Excerpts of The Diary, according to an editorial statement in Sučasnist', arrived from the Soviet Ukraine.

<sup>78</sup>The authenticity of Symonenko's Diary was confirmed by a letter of Symonenko's mother published along with an article by Mykola Nehoda, "Everest pidlosti", Radyans'ka Ukraina, (April 15, 1965), 3. (I. Koshelivets' erroneously quotes this Soviet source as printed on April 5, 1965). An issue of Radyans'ka Ukraina did not appear on April 5, 1965 at all. See: Vasyl' Symonanko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 12, 47. Another Soviet source is an article by Vasyl' Kozachenko and Petro Panch, "Tobi, narode", Literaturna Ukraina, (April 27, 1965), 2.





oldest and best-established methods of literary study"<sup>79</sup>.

In the very first entry of The Diary we find the deep-felt reasoning of an accomplished personality:

September 18, 1962

I begin this diary not because I wish to delude myself with a sense of importance. I need a friend with whom I might share all my doubts. I know of no loyal and sincere friend greater than paper.

The earth bears me now for the 28th time around the sun. Little did I accomplish during this time that could be called good or beautiful. I did however, learn to drink whiskey and smell of tobacco<sup>80</sup> and learned to keep quiet and be careful at times when one should have shouted. And the most terrible of all - I have learned how to be insincere...<sup>81</sup>

Only a very sincere personality is able to put down such a confession on paper, to admit, if only to oneself, ones own shortcomings in full. This confession sheds light on the

<sup>79</sup>Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, (New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), 75.

<sup>80</sup>This and all the future excerpts from The Diary are literally translated from the Ukrainian language as published in Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 171-181. Further reference to this source will be quoted as The Diary with an indication of the page number. It is interesting to note that the editor of the above-named source omitted the underlined sentence from The Diary which was published on a previous occasion in Sučasnist', loc.cit. Another sentence, Vony khudozhnyky, was omitted too and the original version of ...dvadtsyat' vos'myi raz... was changed to ...dvadtsyat' vos'myi rik... Since this is a document of great importance, one can hardly excuse such carelessness by editor Ivan Koshelivets' in this respect. All translations from the Ukrainian language are by the author of this dissertation.

<sup>81</sup>The Diary, 171.





environment of Symonenko's everyday life, on the reality of the Soviet system in general. Symonenko further develops critical thoughts about himself and his environment in the same entry of September 18, 1962:

Lying, probably, is my profession. The inborn talent of a liar is within me. There are three categories of liars: some lie for moral or material gain, others lie for the mere sake of lying as if lying were an Art. This group actually devises, or rather contrives, logical endings to the truth. These kind of liars appear noble to me from the perspectives of my liar's mudpile. They are artists. They are the literary reserve. Life would become boring without them, without them even truth would become scanty and mundane, repulsive and petty. Noble lying does enhance truth<sup>82</sup>.

In the same entry Symonenko goes on to associate himself with the third group of liars. He goes on to say: "...such persons as I are essential to literature. We, with our feeble thoughts, will fertilize the soil from which a giant will arise"<sup>83</sup>. One could expect here that "a giant" in Symonenko's understanding, being raised and educated within Soviet system, would refer to Lenin, as is customary in the Soviet Union. However, Symonenko goes on to give a clear answer: "A future Taras or Franko. I am awaiting him, as a believer awaits the advent of Christ"<sup>84</sup>.

The next available entry of The Diary is completely devoted to deliberations on the deposed "giants". This entry

<sup>82</sup>The Diary, 171-172.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.



is dated September 19, 1962:

Once in a while children, without knowing it, say important things. I remember, about a year ago, we were strolling with Oles' around the Kazbets' Market Place. Coming face to face with a statue of a despot, he asked:

- Father, who is that?

- Stalin.

He kept on staring at him for a while and then asks me in a nonchalant way:

- What reason did he have to climb up there?

True enough, Stalin did not ascend the pedestal, people did not put him there. He himself c l i m b e d up by treachery, meanness, climbed up bloodily and boldly, like all butchers. Now this tiger, who fed on human flesh, would croak from fury, if he found out what a find for scrap-metal collectors his crude, trashy statues have become.

It's horrifying, if glory and deification in life become shame in death. Such is not glory at all, but, perhaps, a plaything which amuses the grown-up children. Only the frail in soul and mind could fail to understand that<sup>85</sup>.

One could hardly add anything to this entry. In the first chapter of this dissertation an attempt was made to show the effect that the Stalinist period had on Ukrainian literature. Symonenko did not live to see the similar deposition of Nikita Khrushchev which came about a year after his death. Now Khrushchev lives in obscurity and the deposition processes in the Soviet Union, judging by the past, are far from being complete.

Suppose, however, we do place ourselves in the conditions under which Symonenko lived and created. We cannot fail then to better understand why "...biography explains and illuminates

<sup>85</sup>The Diary, 172-173.





the actual product of poetry"<sup>86</sup>. Later, while studying more of Symonenko's thoughts, we will see that both his prose and his poetry (above all The Diary) were a result not only of his talent, for he easily could have devoted himself to any literary subject, but of his impulsive reaction against the evil surrounding him.

In the next available entry of September 27, 1962, Symonenko wrote about a surprise visit to Cherkasy of his friend V., whom he did not see for four years. He writes that V. forgot about their meeting in 1958, but: "I - didn't. Even then he had made quite an impression upon me. I began believing in him since our first acquaintance and I think that I have not been mistaken"<sup>87</sup>. Symonenko goes on to complain that a shortage of funds made it impossible for him to join Mykola on a journey to Kaniv<sup>88</sup>. This mention of the mysterious V's first name points to Mykola Vinhranovs'kyi<sup>89</sup> (1935-), a promising young poet, who was Symonenko's contemporary and who shared his conception of life. This interpretation of V's identity is further justified by Symonenko's reference to Vinhranovs'kyi in the next entry of The Diary for October 8,

<sup>86</sup>Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, (New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), 75.

<sup>87</sup>The Diary, 173.

<sup>88</sup>Kaniv - is a town near Kiev, where Taras Shevchenko was buried.

<sup>89</sup>Dictionary IV, 197-198.





1962:

Three days and a hundred impressions. Vinhranovs'kyi, P'yanov, Kolomyets' and your sinful az<sup>90</sup> have made cavalry attacks on Kryvyi Rih and Kirovohrad. And though not once did we succeed in appearing before a large audience, I have remained content. Mykola - he really is a tribune. The words in his poems are simply bursting with passion and thoughts. When side-by-side with him one's soul expands<sup>91</sup>.

At this point of The Diary Symonenko sheds some light upon his religious beliefs. It would be worthwhile to mention here that views similar to those of Symonenko on religious thought in the Soviet Union after the revolution were written by Nicholas Berdiayev<sup>92</sup> (1874-1948), a Russian, who was banished from the Soviet Union shortly after his arrest in 1921. In his works: The Meaning of History (1923); A New Middle Ages (1923); The Origin of Russian Communism (1937); and Spirit and Reality (1937), Berdiayev identified Christianity with humanism. "Like Dostoevsky he had faith in the Russian idea as religious universality, and he followed Solovyov in the latter's concepts of salvation through collectivity and of the supreme metaphysical value of humanity"<sup>93</sup>.

We cannot classify Symonenko as a believer, and yet his thoughts in the following passage of The Diary are of

<sup>90</sup>Symonenko refers to himself.

<sup>91</sup>The Diary, 174.

<sup>92</sup>"Berdiayev", Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopedia (2nd ed.), IV, 624.

<sup>93</sup>Marc Slonim, Modern Russian Literature. From Chekhov to the Present, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 115-116.



importance:

I have argued with P'yanov about "Troyandy v trauri"<sup>94</sup>. It seems to me that one cannot confuse the Madonna created by the artists with the strictly spiritual Mother of God. Hypocrites in cassocks have converted the beautiful Jesus and His Mother into rapists of human flesh and spirit. For if even the most beautiful legend (and I consider Jesus and the Virgin Mary as unique creations) have become a tool for spiritual oppression, then I cannot judge the "personae dramatis" of the legend without connecting them to the deeds that the infidels are doing while hiding behind their names. No highly noble and highly humane precepts of any teaching can be of service to progress if they have become a fixed dogma. The purity of Virgin Mary is worthy of admiration, but, forgive me, could not stand as an example to follow. Selfdenial of the pleasures of the flesh works against nature, and therefore is cruel and reactionary<sup>95</sup>.

The above passage tends to classify Symonenko as an agnostic. However, although he regards Jesus and the Virgin Mary as a "beautiful legend", one must agree that all other deliberations in this passage are mature and objective. Even more significant is what follows within the same entry where Symonenko reveals the true meaning behind his poem "Troyandy v trauri":

Besides, in "Troyandy v trauri" my intention was not at all aimed at "overthrowing the gods". In them I rise in opposition to the new religion, against the hypocrites who are trying, and not without success, to convert Marxism into a religion, into a Procrustean bed of science, art and love. Sad examples are found in kibernetics, genetics, the rapid growth of fairy-mushrooms in literature and Fine Arts, everlasting appeals calling for sacrifices, and the

<sup>94</sup>Symonenko refers here to one of his poems. Only a passage of "Troyandy v trauri" were ever printed. See: Zmina, (September, 1962), 10.

<sup>95</sup>The Diary, 174.







never-ending promises of a "paradise to come". Is all that really so far removed from the tragedy of Bruno and Galileo, from psalm-writing and icon-painting, from the monasteries and the Kingdom of Heaven?

If Marxism will not withstand the violent advance of dogmatism, then it is doomed to become a religion. No teaching can ever monopolize the intellectual life of humanity. Einstein, after all, was not my political adherent, yet he made discoveries that have shaken the very roots of science<sup>96</sup>.

After graduating from Kiev University<sup>97</sup> in 1957, Symonenko was assigned to work on the staff of Cherkas'ka pravda and Molod' Cherkashchyny<sup>98</sup>, an assignment which often gave him the opportunity to roam the countryside. It would have been impossible for him, a person with a deep feeling for human justice, not to notice what was going on in the various kolkhozes which he was visiting.

There is almost no material available for study regarding Symonenko's journalistic activities. Symonenko contributed his features mainly to the above-named newspapers. These were regional newspapers and as such were not distributed abroad.

In the next available entry for October 16, 1962, Symonenko reveals a typical incident. The event described occurred probably somewhere in Cherkas'ka oblast':

Nothing could be more horrible than unlimited power in the hands of a limited man.

The chairman of kolkhoz in Yaremenko's village was screaming in helplessness and fury during a

<sup>96</sup>The Diary, 174-175.

<sup>97</sup>Dictionary V, 432.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.



meeting:

- I'll arrange another 1933 for you!<sup>99</sup>

Naturally, nobody even thought about taking this scoundrel out by the scruff of his neck. And yet this fool with one idiotic phrase would destroy the achievements made by dozens of sensible people. If our leaders had more brains than they really do, such loudmouths would be admiring the sky from behind iron bars<sup>100</sup>.

The above entry constitutes the first direct accusation against the existing order in the Soviet Ukraine. Note that Symonenko does not accuse as much the "scoundrel" as the leaders who allow such scoundrels to flourish in responsible positions.

Very interesting and relevant to the present-day situation in the Soviet Ukraine are Symonenko's thoughts about poetry. In the entry for October 21, 1962 he writes:

I hate to the point of senselessness official, patented, well-fed wisdom. No matter what quotations the useless would utilize trying to shore up their intellectual ceiling, it's still too low to accommodate a human being of normal size. What kind of space is it if one cannot freely move in it? What kind of poetry is possible without thought? True poetry is magnificent wisdom<sup>101</sup>.

He then goes on to complain about impoverished satire and ends this entry by saying that "...the earth is full of Herostrates"<sup>102</sup>.

The next and final entry for 1962 is of personal nature. Dated November 9, 1962, this entry shows that Symonenko, critical

<sup>99</sup>1933 was the year of famine in Ukraine. Millions perished, while Communists were enforcing collectivization in the Soviet Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union.

<sup>100</sup>The Diary, 175.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 176.





of others, was also critical of himself. He writes: "...I feel ashamed when I recall my past behavior. Yesterday, I conducted myself as the scum of society, - even insulting people. How sad, that nobody squashed my nose!"<sup>103</sup> He ends this confession with a remark: "...Belated repentance always looks like one is posing. But there is no other way out for me. One has to learn to observe oneself from the side"<sup>104</sup>.

At this point The Diary is interrupted for almost half a year. The next available entry is dated April 21, 1963 and deals with formalism. Symonenko's thoughts on formalism are original if only for the reason that he accuses of formalism the limited, official horizons of "socialist realism". He says:

Almost half a year has passed since I looked into this notebook, despite the fact that some events have occurred during this past six months which somehow should have been recorded.

I have almost choked up from the powder smoke of ideological campaigns. Realism again emerged victorious, not with works, of course, but by having on its side the administrative measures.

To be honest, I think that the danger of formalist madness was somehow overdone. At least in Ukraine I have not encountered a single follower of abstractionism or of some kind of neo-futurism. The real danger, just as before, remains the threat of formalist thoughtlessness in literature. For isn't it formalism, when hundreds of second rate writers use stereotyped patterns in sucking dry the so-called eternal ideas like: - love your work, respect father and mother, don't see evil in your neighbour, and a dozen or two others? Formalism starts where thought dies.

When a poet fails to produce new thoughts and emotions - he is a formalist. It does not matter if and how he advertises his belonging to the realists. Realism

<sup>103</sup>The Diary, 176.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.





cannot be toady. There is the realism to which Shevchenko contributed and the realism which relies on the services of Dmyterko<sup>105</sup>. Two different things! For "dmyterkos" will never inherit literature. They live of and not for literature. It is doubtful if anybody could accuse me of formalism, and yet nothing of mine is being published<sup>106</sup>.

Here, for the first time, Symonenko speaks about "administrative measures" as applied to literary activities in the Soviet Ukraine. Symonenko proves to be violently opposed to the processes which tend to impoverish Ukrainian literature. His comparison of the national great Taras Shevchenko and his realism to that of the "socialist-realist" Lyubomyr Dmyterko, speaks louder than any comment. Furthermore, Symonenko's reference to the fact that the "dmyterkos" in literature are only coincidental and temporary phenomena shows that the young generation, for which Symonenko was one of the foremost spokesmen, does not share the views of Soviet literary policies.

In the next entry, dated July 6, 1963, Symonenko passes some opinions of a personal nature, the most significant part of which is the ending: "...Last Sunday we were in Odessa, where local numbskulls amused us plenty with their idiotic fright that something might happen. The fact was that we were forbidden to appear at an evening dedicated to Shevchenko. It seems that there are some who are afraid of Taras even now. Philistines of the revolution<sup>107</sup>.

<sup>105</sup>On Lyubomyr Dmyterko see: Dictionary IV, 397-408.

<sup>106</sup>The Diary, 177.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 178.



This shows that local authorities in the Soviet Ukraine are in the position to invoke literary censorship. It becomes even more significant when one considers the fact that Taras Shevchenko's works are not forbidden and are widely read in Ukraine. It was the idea behind a literary evening in honor of Shevchenko, a national poet, that was objectionable to the local authorities. Courageous Symonenko had a chance to amuse himself with "local numbskulls" who worried that "something might happen".

By the time Symonenko wrote his next entry, dated July 22, 1963, he was beginning to feel the advent of his near end:

I think that my extinction has begun. Physically I am almost helpless, though morally I am not completely exhausted. Thinking about dying I feel no fear. It is so, probably, because the end is still far away. Funny thing: I do not want to die, and yet I have no particular yen for life. Ten years more would be enough for me.

I look back on my past with irony. I'll soon be twenty-nine, and what have I accomplished? Did I even begin to scratch the surface of something worthwhile? Not life but a chain of petty worries, petty failures, petty disappointments, and petty achievements!

No, I did not imagine myself living like that. Fortunate is he who wants little from life - he never gets to be disappointed in it. The most simple and most straightforward path to so-called happiness is to become a Philistine. The brain is capable of making its owner happy<sup>108</sup>.

One of the most significant sections of The Diary is the ending of the next entry. In it Symonenko directly accuses the Soviet Ukrainian press of censoring his works.

<sup>108</sup>The Diary, 178-179.







This entry is dated September 3, 1963. After reminiscing about the past summer and his trip to Kaniv, Symonenko writes:

...My friends have Fallen silent, nothing can be heard about them. The printed matter has become even more inept and impudent. Literaturna Ukraina<sup>109</sup> castrates my article, Ukraina<sup>110</sup> treats cruelly my poetry. every lackey is doing what he pleases. How is it possible to burn with thankfulness, how can one fail to pray every morning and every evening for such who bestowed such freedom upon us? To this I can only add that in April my poetry was taken off the press in Zmina<sup>111</sup>, lashed out at in Zhovten'<sup>112</sup>, and later rejected by Dnipro<sup>113</sup> and Vitchyzna<sup>114</sup>.

Ay, ay, ay, happy so! We are all in press.  
And that is what we need for progress<sup>115</sup>.

A careful search was carried out by the author of this dissertation in Literaturna Ukraina and Ukraina for the year 1963 to locate the article and poetry by Symonenko which the poet claimed to be abused by censorship. In Literaturna Ukraina (August 20, 1963), there appears an article by Vasyl' Symonenko entitled "Dekoratsii i zhyvi dereva" containing critical thoughts about contemporary Soviet Ukrainian poetry. This is the only article by Symonenko that appeared in Literaturna Ukraina during 1963 so there can be no doubt that this is the article referred to as being "castrated". Even so this article carries quite a

<sup>109</sup>Literaturna Ukraina is the official newspaper of the Ukrainian Writers Union and is published semi-weekly in Kiev.

<sup>110</sup>Ukraina is a bi-weekly magazine, published in Kiev.

<sup>111</sup>Zmina (now changed to Ranok) is a Communist Youth monthly in Kiev.

<sup>112</sup>Zhovten' is a literary monthly published in L'viv.

<sup>113</sup>Dnipro is a literary monthly published in Kiev.

<sup>114</sup>Vitchyzna is the official literary magazine of the Ukrainian Writers Union, published monthly in Kiev.

<sup>115</sup>The Diary, 179-180.



punch against those who "profane literature" and who "separate labour from man". As an example Symonenko quotes with admiration the poetry of Maksym Ryl's'kyi, as opposed to the poetry of "literary dabblers"<sup>116</sup>. One can only admire Symonenko's courage and his outspoken vigor, for if this article was "castrated" by Soviet censorship and, although mutilated, still carried such a punch, then one can only imagine the size of Symonenko's indignation in the original version.

Further research revealed in Ukraina 19 (August, 1963), 10, two short Symonenko's poems "Zemne tyazhinnya" and "Ridna zemle..." with a short biographical note and a portrait of the poet. Both poems can be found in Symonenko's posthumous book<sup>117</sup> published in Kiev. I do not know how much censorship was exercised over Symonenko's posthumous book, but the difference between the two published versions is so obvious that both are presented here in full. The parts which differ as appearing in both sources are underlined.

In Ukraina:

#### ЗЕМНЕ ТЯЖІННЯ

Світе мій гучний, мільйоннокий,  
 Ніжний, і ласкавий, і жорстокий -  
Пристрасний, збурунений, німий,  
 Дай мені свій простір і неспокій,  
 Сонцем душу жадібну налий!

Дай мені у думку динаміту,  
 Дай мені любові, дай добра,  
Гуркоти у долю мою, світе,  
Хвилями прадавнього Дніпра.

<sup>116</sup>V. Symonenko "Dekoratsii i zhyvi dereva", Literaturna Ukraina (August 20, 1963), 2.

<sup>117</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964.





Не шкодуй добра мені, людині,  
Щастя не жалій моїм літам -  
Все одно ті скарби по краплині  
Я тобі закохано віддам.

\* \* \*

Рідна земле! Мозок мій світліє,  
І душа ніжнішою стає,  
Як твої сподіванки і мрії  
У життя вриваються моє.

Я живу тобою і для тебе,  
Вийшов з тебе, в тебе перейду,  
Під твоїм високочолим небом  
Гартував я силу молоду

Хто тебе любов'ю обікраде,  
Хто твої турботи обмине -  
Хай того земне тяжіння зрадить  
І з прокляттям безвість проковтне!<sup>118</sup>

In Zemne tyazhinnya:

\* \* \*

Світ який - мереживо казкове!  
Світ який - ні краю ні кінця!  
Зорі й трави, мрево світанкове,  
Магія коханого лица.  
Світе мій гучний, мільйонноокий,  
Пристрасний, збурунений, німий  
Ніжний, і ласкавий, і жорстокий,  
Дай мені свій простір і неспокій,  
Сонцем душу жадібну налий!  
Дай мені у думку динаміту,  
Дай мені любові, дай добра,  
Гуркочи у долю мою, світе,  
Хвилями прадавнього Дніпра.  
Не шкодуй добра мені, людині,  
Щастя не жалій моїм літам -  
Все одно ті скарби по краплині  
Я тобі закохано віддам.<sup>119</sup>

\* \* \*

Земле рідна! Мозок мій світліє,  
І душа ніжнішою стає,  
Як твої сподіванки і мрії  
У життя вливаються моє.

<sup>118</sup>Both poems appeared in: Ukraina 19 (August, 1963), 10.

<sup>119</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'",  
Kiev - 1964, 7.





Я живу тобою і для тебе,  
 Вийшов з тебе, в тебе перейду,  
 Під твоїм високочолім небом  
 Гартував я душу молоду.  
 Хто тебе любов'ю обікраде,  
 Хто твої турботи обмине,  
 Хай того земне тяжіння зрадить  
 І з прокляттям безвість проковтне! 120

In the first poem, Ukraina omitted four lines. Further, the order of two lines was changed and so was the spelling of two words. The title "Zemne tyazhinnya" was added above the poem where Symonenko used only three stars. The next poem suffered less changes although the word order of the first two words was changed and there is one change in spelling; the word dushu is substituted by sylu, and there is also one punctuation change. In this case, unlike the first poem, the change in spelling alters completely the meaning of the word, since vlyvayut'sya and vryvayut'sya have different meanings altogether - the value of the line is changed.

These changes, unlike some other of Symonenko's poetry, which will be discussed in a separate place within this dissertation, have no significant relevance. However, they do not improve Symonenko's originals (if the versions printed in his posthumous book are originals). Thus, Symonenko's indignation in The Diary: "...Ukraina treats cruelly my poetry", and "...every lackey is doing what he pleases".

In the same entry of The Diary dated September 3, 1963, Symonenko complains that: "...in April my poetry was taken off

<sup>120</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 49.



the press in Zmina". At the time of writing this entry the September, 1963 issue of Zmina was probably still not available to him, for in that issue a selection of his poems was published along with the portrait of the poet<sup>121</sup>.

There are only two more available entries in The Diary, the first one dated September 5 and the last September 20, 1963 - less than three months before the poet's premature death. Both are relevant to the overall picture of Symonenko and his works, for in the first he mentions Mykola Nehoda<sup>122</sup> (1928-), namely that their friendship has ended. The same Nehoda later appointed himself to denounce the Ukrainian emigres for printing The Diary and using excerpts of it in their broadcasts to the Soviet Ukraine. He did so in Symonenko's name in an article "Everest pidlosti", printed in Literaturna Ukraina (April 27, 1965), 2. This is ironical since Symonenko denounces Nehoda in The Diary three months before his death. In the entry for September 5, 1963, we read:

Yesterday I wrote "Kazku pro Duryla". I wrote it in one breath, although some notes were taken before. Today I still like it. How sad that there is nobody to read it to.

Now I am even lonelier than before here in Cherkasy. Even the group at the Molod' Cherkashchyny is gone. The paths of friendship between me and Nehoda and Ohloblyn, one could say, were overgrown by thick, rank weeds. To one of them I was useful, as long as I could have been helpful; the second one proved to be simply a fly-by-night operator. I have no doubt that he will

<sup>121</sup>Zmina (September, 1963), 4-5.







hound me with the same enthusiasm with which he used to praise me earlier. And he already had demonstrated that from several pulpits at a number of meetings.

But the job must go on<sup>123</sup>.

The last entry of The Diary, refers, most likely, to Symonenko's poem "Samotnist'", which was printed in Symonenko's posthumous book Bereh chekan', published abroad in 1965. Both the translated entry and the original poem are offered here:

When I speak about a "wild island" and my loneliness, I do not mean it in contempt of people. The fact that in Cherkasy I have almost no friends does not mean that I regard everybody as abject, not worthy of my attention, etc. (my wife is accusing me of that). It is simply that I have not found among them anyone with the same spiritual outlook as I, and friendship, as we all know, cannot depend upon "ratio" alone.

Not long ago I have become acquainted with B.H.

It seems that I am writing worse than a year ago. My brain and heart have fallen into idleness<sup>124</sup>.

#### САМОТНІСТЬ

Часто я самотній, ніби Крузо  
Виглядаю з-за обрію кораблів.  
І думка безпорадно грузне  
В клейкім баговинні слів.

На своєму дикому острові,  
В шкіряниці з убитих надій,  
Штрикаю небо очима гострими:  
- Де ти, П'ятнице мій?

Залпи відчаю рвуться із горла,  
Гуркотять у байдужу даль:  
Пошли мені, Боже, хоч ворога,  
Коли друга послати жаль!<sup>125</sup>

With the above entry ends The Diary, which Symonenko

<sup>123</sup>The Diary, 180.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 180-181.

<sup>125</sup>This poem was unknown abroad and was first published in the chapter "Poetry Forbidden in URSR", Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 155. Now it also appears in Vasyl' Symonenko, Poezii, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1966, 189.



himself named "Okraitsi dumok". It contains one year and two days of Symonenko's life, his doubts, his worries, his philosophy of life and his loneliness. Symonenko started The Diary with the motto: "To read other peoples diaries without permission is the Everest of baseness (unknown aphorism of commoner Wilson)"<sup>126</sup>. But since he died on December 14 (?)<sup>127</sup>, 1963, there was no way of asking him for permission to read his "Okraitsi dumok".

The Diary determines Symonenko's place within the framework of Soviet Ukrainian literature. It is not on the side of "socialist realism". Knowing the most intimate thoughts of the poet is already a stepping-stone towards better understanding of his works.

<sup>126</sup>The Diary, 171.

<sup>127</sup>Dictionary V, 432. See also: Zmina (January, 1964), 24 - gives the date of death as December 13, 1963.





### Thirteen Short Stories

Symonenko left behind thirteen known short stories. From the study of all available sources it can only be presumed that some of Symonenko's short stories appeared in print while he was still alive<sup>128</sup>. Ten short stories were printed posthumously<sup>129</sup> in Soviet Ukrainian periodicals and in Literaturna Ukraina. In late 1965 the only book of Symonenko's prose was published<sup>130</sup>. This little book contained thirteen short stories.

The most important aspect of Symonenko's short stories is his use of word-power in the characterization of heroes. His heroes, although ordinary people, come alive in a very extraordinary way to win the reader and remain memorable. His images are immediate as only a direct reaction to individual experiences can be. The dialogues and occasional monologues are presented in an open, matter-of-fact way, nothing is ever out of place or time, and the narrative is in such exact

<sup>128</sup>After a search of all major Soviet Ukrainian periodicals such as Vitchyzna, Dnipro, Zhovten', Zmina and bi-weekly Literaturna Ukraina (hazeta) for 1960-1965, no short stories by Vasyl' Symonenko printed prior to January, 1964 could be located.

<sup>129</sup>The following short stories appeared posthumously: "Duma pro dida", Zmina (January, 1964); "Vyno z troyand", "Kukurikaly pivni na rushnykhakh", "Chorna pidkova", "Vin zavadzhaiv ii spaty", "Vesillya Opanasa Krokvy", Dnipro (January, 1964); and "Neimovirne interv'yu", "Psykhologichnyi poyedynok", "Pos'mishky nikoho ne obrazhayut'", "Siryi paket", Literaturna Ukraina (April 10, 1964).

<sup>130</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Vyno z troyand, vyd-vo "Kamenyar", L'viv - 1965.





expressions and rhythmic structure that not a word could be omitted without damaging the content. In a way all thirteen short stories are economical and often only a few words reveal a complex situation, a few phrases the meaning of the plot. Let us examine the essence of the meaning as demonstrated by the narrators elaboration on Ol'ha in the first short story:

На неї задивлялися навіть дідугани, і вже рідко який хлопець не міряв очима з голови до п'ят. В одних у зорі світилося захоплення, в других – неприхована хіть, а треті милувалися нею, як шедевром краси. Коли вона кидала чорні коси на пружні груди і пливла селом з сапкою на плечі, хлопці божеволіли. Приходили боязко до її воріт і натхненно говорили про кохання, а вона тільки слухала і мовчала. Ніхто не насмільювався торкнутися її, мов боявся осквернити дотиком красу. Вона ніким не гордувала і ніколи не ганила, а тільки прохала прощаючись:

– Не ходи до мене більше. Добре?<sup>131</sup>

This passage already provides a reader with all there is to know about Ol'ha. A beautiful village girl, an object of common admiration, conscious of her beauty and yet unassuming, searching for more than casual flirtation. From the narrators beginning we also learn that the story is going to involve romantic experiences since every sentence suggests such anticipation.

Another very important device in Symonenko's short stories is his ability to involve the reader, to make him

<sup>131</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Vyno z troyand, vyd-vo "Kamenyar", L'viv – 1965, 3. The opening story by the same name. From now on this source will be quoted in the following manner: The title of the story, Vyno z troyand, and page number.





a part of the story. At the very beginning of each story in Vyno z troyand the reader gets to know Symonenko's heroes, to feel, sympathize with them, to like and dislike as they do. This device can be successfully applied only if the author is able to anticipate the reaction of his reader, or is gifted with above average psychological insight. In Symonenko's case there seems to be little doubt of his gift in both of these fields. A reader not only gets to know intimately Symonenko's heroes but often recreates them through experiences in his own environment. Let us examine the psychological climax between two young people in the shortest of Symonenko's thirteen short stories:

Вона метнула на нього дві сині блискавки.

- Чому ти весь час дивишся в землю?

Він важко, мов гирі, підняв свої очі і спідлоба глипнув на неї, але за мить його очі знову впали в траву.

- Це не має значення, куди я дивлюся.

- Ти ніколи не дивишся мені в очі. Ти завжди був жадібним і нетерплячим, - розстрілювала вона його сумніви. - Ти не хотів бути щасливим зі мною, ти просто хотів ошасливити мене.

Вона раптом заплакала і ледве втрималася, щоб не припасти йому до грудей.

- Я теж хочу бодай одну людину зробити щасливою, - сердито ввігнала підбор у глевку землю і прожогом кинула геть.<sup>132</sup>

This dialogue could have taken place anywhere in the world between two young people of any nationality. A translation of this short story is offered in the appendix to this dissertation to illustrate Symonenko's mastery of genre. For

<sup>132</sup>"Chorna pidkova", Vyno z troyand, 15.





a young writer who left behind only thirteen known short stories, this, indeed, seems to support a statement made in the previous chapter that Symonenko "...easily could have devoted himself to any literary subject...".

As a representative of the latest generation of Soviet Ukrainian writers, popularly named "shestydesyatnyky", Symonenko offered a new point of view, quite rebellious against the usual norms of "socialist realism". Symonenko's short stories are often in direct opposition to the doctrine of "socialist realism". In "Vyno z troyand" the hero of the story who wins the love and admiration of beautiful Ol'ha is not a true representative of "socialist youth", but a hopeless romantic in love with flowers, an idealist with a fairy-tale world of his own, and a cripple. In "Vin zavazhav ii spaty" the narrator entering Hnat's stream of consciousness states: "Some time ago he used to make fun of the positive heroes in cheap novels. He always used to dream that a workbench or a tractor were positive"<sup>133</sup>. In "Posmishky nikoho ne obrazhayut'" a representative of Soviet "neo-Victorian prudery" scolds two youngsters smiling at each other the author is siding with the young people:

- Та ми навіть не знайомі! - засміялася дівчина.  
Від несподіванки він ледви не став кам'яним монументом.  
- Як? Ви навіть не знайомі? І ви сидите поруч і посміхаєтесь одне одному перед очима цілого міста?

<sup>133</sup>"Vin zavazhav ii spaty", Vyno z troyand, 16.





Мені здавалося, що він репне від гніву, він так заходився шпарувати нас банальностями, що навіть сонце спіткнулося і нахромилось на вістря тополі. Я хотів уже заткнути вуха і сторчма кинутися, куди влучу, але тут озвався отой сивий-сивий чоловік.

- Якого дідька ви прилипли до цих молодят? Нехай собі посміхаються, це ображає тільки бегемотів.

- Через таких потуральників, як ви, і молодь у нас розбещена, - з жовцю напереваги ринув захисник цнотливості на сивочолого.

- Та йдіть геть, бо покличу міліціонера, - вто-млено відповів той. - Зануда.

- Це вас треба у міліцію! Безсоромники! - за-репетував ображений, але таки ушніпився йти, і за хвилю його постать, сповнена обуренням і прописаними істинами, зникла за остріхом кущів.

А ми знов сиділи і посміхалися. І небо реготало так, що аж видно було його червоні ясна.<sup>134</sup>

Symonenko enters the realm of common understanding that should be shared by writer and reader and enriches every experience with emotional implications. There develops such an intimate relationship between the reader and Symonenko's heroes that all come to life in every isolated incident.

The language of Symonenko's short stories is rich with metaphors. In the above-quoted passage "repne vid hnivu", "sontse spitknulosya", "vistrya topoli", "chervoni yasna neba", vividly illustrate the rich associations of Symonenko's intimate inner world and his creative, original individuality.

Being primarily a poet, Symonenko often turns for assistance to the iambic impetus of the Ukrainian language. "Vony prysily bilya chornoi duhy" (page 15), "...a tin' uzhe syahnula didovykh kolin" (page 23), "...a hlyan', shcho ya prynis vid

<sup>134</sup>"Posmishky nikoho ne obrazhayut'", Vyno z troyand, 34-35.





zaitnya" (page 28), "...hroza obmyla vtomu" (page 32), "...my povtalysya z vokzalu" (page 37), and many other examples present in every one of his short stories could very well be the opening lines of individual poems.

Other rhythmic patterns occur in Symonenko's prose.

"Bili pryvydy zakhodyly do vestybyulyu, hupotily..." (trochee, page 44), "...osinni svitanky tryvozhni, yak marennya" (amphibrach, page 10), "...koly poizd u dal' zahurkoche" (anapest, page 36), "...skorchyv porepani huby Omel'ko" (dactyl, page 49), are only a few of basic feet in Symonenko's varied patterns, each of which creates a special mood that proves the existence of a certain link between reality and the discriminative handling of words. This link might well be imagination, and the blend of all three is what we mean referring to something as "a work of art".

Art is always only an imitation of reality. It uses symbols to express, and it uses stylistic devices to impress. Of the two only the last is and must be dependent upon linguistics. Linguistics, however, is not the purpose of study of this dissertation. Our aim is to view Symonenko's works as a reflection of his age and the contemporary state of affairs within Soviet literary society, life of Ukrainian people, which the young poet imitated and often vigorously criticized. As an example of Symonenko's symbolic expression, we turn again to the very first short story "Vyno z troyand" and quote



the fairy tale Andrii is telling to the children in the garden:

Ці голомозі квітникарі вечорами, як мухи, обсідали Андрія. Він розповідав їм, що бачить у снах квіти, як вони перешіптуються з сивими зорями, вигадував казки про дивовижні краї, де квіти не тільки пахнуть, але й розмовляють, і ходять, і граються в піжмурки, а в'януть лише тоді, коли в тій країні з'являється хоч одна нещаслива людина.

- Квіти люблять щасливих. У нас від нещастя вони не в'януть а плачуть. Ви бачили, скільки вранці на них роси? Ото їхні сльози. Хто росяного ранку знайде незаплакану квітку, той буде дуже щасливий...

- А ви знаходили незаплакану квітку?

- Ні, я не знаходив, та, мабуть і не знайду...<sup>135</sup>

How could one find "a flower without tears" in a land, where happiness is a luxury which only those "in power" can afford? Symbolic reference to "lands" where "flowers talk, and walk, and play hide-and-seek, and fade away if only one unhappy person should appear" is contrasted with the reality of Andrii's surroundings. He says: "Here flowers do not fade away, they cry when facing unhappiness". Andrii goes on to say that he has never seen a tearless flower and doubts if he ever will.

Thus communicating with the children, Andrii relates a certain meaning, a situation, that only draws one possible conclusion: there can be no happiness here since there are no flowers to be found without tears. One could go further in this analogy and say that since this action is taking place in the Soviet Ukraine, true happiness is imagined as existing only in a fairy-tale land.

<sup>135</sup>"Vyno z troyand", Vyno z troyand, 5.





All that was said about Symonenko's short stories so far indicates strong ties between language and thoughts in his creative process. While reflecting what is understood as an "objective reality", in the subjective cognition of whatever such "objective reality" should be, the language of Symonenko's short stories also covers and blends in his own psychic experiences with "objective reality". This in turn could be viewed as the function of/or his creativity within such "objective reality".

In most of Symonenko's short stories various problems facing the Soviet Ukrainian youth are brought out. With the exception of "Vesillya Opanasa Krokvy", all other short stories are about or involve problems of the youth - youth which seems to detach itself from the "established criteria" of official views.

Almost nothing has been written about Symonenko's short stories in the Soviet Ukrainian press. Only an introductory statement to a selection of Symonenko's prose has appeared so far in emigré sources (the universal Ukrainian monthly Novi dni for June, 1966).

However, Soviet Ukrainian sources praised Symonenko's short stories in the few instances when mention of them did appear in print. "Symonenko's heroes are sincere, inspired, beautiful people, people one wants to remember and imitate" - writes a reader in a column called "Slovo chytacha" in



Vitchyzna<sup>136</sup>; "Pretty people, maybe not so inviting from the outside, as from the inner self, live in the talented, poetic stories of Vasyl' Symonenko" - says a critic in Literaturna Ukraina<sup>137</sup>; "In 'Siryi paket' and 'Naivne divchys'ko' the moody moments when a young girl discovers a woman in herself are surprisingly well caught. 'Posmishky nikoho ne obrazhayut'', 'Bili pryvydy', 'Benket na toku' - all are stories that discover what is humane in a human", observes a reviewer of Symonenko's Vyno z troyand<sup>138</sup>.

Cautiously but sincerely Symonenko's short stories are praised by the most recent review in Vitchyzna for April, 1966: "The book contains thirteen short stories and in every one of them Symonenko remains a poet - a poet of a great civic sound and salving aesthetic effort. In his works there are no conditional beauties or purely stylistic effects. His language is laconic and in this laconism the mighty elasticity of a bow-string is concealed"<sup>139</sup>.

The first page editorial comment in the Novi dni, which is published in Toronto, says: "Try to take any of Symonenko's

<sup>136</sup>Ivan Hryshai, "Pro prozu V. Symonenka", Vitchyzna (September, 1964), 215.

<sup>137</sup>S. Adamchuk, "Nevelyckhi rozpovidi pro velyke zhyttya", Literaturna Ukraina (January 31, 1964), 2.

<sup>138</sup>Ivan Doroshenko, "Mova talantu", Literaturna Ukraina (January 7, 1966), 3.

<sup>139</sup>Ivan Matsenko, "Poeziya v prozi", Vitchyzna (April, 1966), 192-193.





short stories and omit at least one word, not to say an entire sentence, and you will find a true cave. Not only that, you will not even be able to change the word order of any given sentence. This shows not only the great talent and culture of the writer but also his creative virtue, and the great effort he put into his works"<sup>140</sup>.

Only thirteen of Symonenko's short stories are available, yet they have definitely entered and taken their rightful place in Ukrainian literature.

<sup>140</sup>Editorial comment to: Vasyl' Symonenko, "Noveli", Novi dni (June, 1966), 1.



## The Poetry of Courage and Anger

### A. The Poets of the Sixties (Shestydesyatnyky)

No other literary phenomena in the Soviet Ukraine received more attention and controversy than the poets of the sixties. It was and continues to be so, for they came as a total surprise to all. In the Soviet Ukraine and abroad their appearance on the Soviet literary scene brought about controversial discussions. Universally acknowledged, they represent the voice of the Soviet Ukrainian youngest generation of writers, born and raised during the years of the "construction of socialism" in the USSR. Their formative years were the bleak years of enforced Stalinism, when "socialist realism" was the only form of literary activity recognised and supported by the Communist Party. In the first chapter of this dissertation they are referred to as the fourth generation of Soviet Ukrainian writers. In the Dictionary this generation is represented by seventeen names. There are, of course, many more who for one or another reason were not entered into the Dictionary.

The movement which later was to become responsible for the catchword "shestydesyatnyky" was spearheaded in poetry by Lina Kostenko<sup>141</sup> (1930-), "...artistically the most mature"<sup>142</sup>,

<sup>141</sup>Dictionary IV, 771-772.

<sup>142</sup>Max Hayward and Edward L. Crowley (eds.), Soviet Literature in the Sixties, (New York. London: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1964), 113.





who wrote during the late fifties. Her first volume of poetry, Prominnya zemli, appeared in 1957 and was followed by Vitryla in 1958 and Mandrivky sertsya in 1961<sup>143</sup>. Soviet Ukrainian poetry has not been the same ever since. That is, its drab, onesided glorification of the Communist Party and its achievements was finally met head-on by the courageous voice of a young poetess who just would not conform. As a result Lina Kostenko was accused of "formalism" by two leading Soviet Ukrainian critics of the time, Yurii Barabash and Victor Ivanysenko, and finally, during the Fourth Convention of Soviet Ukrainian Writers, in March, 1959, by Mykola Bazhan himself. Mykola Bazhan was at the time the head of the Soviet Ukrainian Writers Union<sup>144</sup>.

The official castigation directed against Lina Kostenko caused her to fall silent, rather than conform, during 1959-1960, but her voice was heard again more strongly than ever in 1961. At a time when it seemed that the Party-line had emerged victorious, Lina Kostenko spoke again, and this time she was joined by a group of young, seldom or completely unheard of poets and writers. This time her efforts rapidly gained recognition and even admiration from the former opposition to the new trends in Soviet Ukrainian poetry and prose. The same recognition came to her followers. New

<sup>143</sup>Dictionary IV, 772.

<sup>144</sup>Bohdan Kravtsiv "'Velyka vedmedytsya' i 'honchi psy'", Poety chumatskoho shlyakhu, vyd-vo "Biblioteka Sučasnosty No.3", München - 1962, 5.



names such as Mykola Vinhranovs'kyi<sup>145</sup> (1935-), Yevhen Hutsalo<sup>146</sup> (1937-), Ivan Drach<sup>147</sup> (1936-), Vitalii Korotych<sup>148</sup> (1936-), Mykola Synhaivs'kyi<sup>149</sup> (omitted in the Dictionary), appeared in Soviet Ukrainian literature. All of them, different from one another in style, seemed to share a common cause: to break the ties with gray, official "wisdom" in Soviet Ukrainian literature. The program to follow, as observed in a forword to a recent monography on the poets of the sixties<sup>150</sup>, was proclaimed most strongly by the same Lina Kostenko in her two poems printed in Soviet Ukrainian periodicals in 1961. The essence of both poems we offer here:

О, скільки стало в нашому столітті  
 скалічених і безнадійних душ...  
 Захворів дехто на морську хворобу,  
 хитається по палубі землі.  
 Розхитаний, спустошений і кволий,  
 біда, якщо в мистецтво забреде, -  
 шукає форм не бачених ніколи,  
 шукає форм, нечуваних ніде.  
 І тут же просто шукачі прокорму,  
 і шахраї, і скептиків юрма -  
 шукають найсучаснішої форми  
 для того змісту,  
 що в душі нема.

<sup>145</sup>Dictionary IV, 197-198.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 379-380.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., 479-480.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 760-762.

<sup>149</sup>This talented young poet is omitted by the Dictionary. Yet by the time of publication of the Dictionary Synhaivs'kyi had published five volumes of poetry. They are: Zhyva krynychka (1958), Zemle, chuyu tebe (1961), Hrono (1962), Moi storinky svitu (1963), and Maya radiostantsiya (1964) in Russian.

<sup>150</sup>Bohdan Kravtsiv, "'Velyka vedmedytsya' i 'honchi psy'", Poety chumatskoho shlyakhu, vyd-vo "Biblioteka Sučasnosty No.3", München - 1962.





.....

Різні бувають естафети.  
 Передають поетам поети  
 З душі у душу,  
 Із мови в мову  
 Свободу духу і правду слова,  
 Не промінявши на речі тлінні -  
 На славолюбство і на вигоду... 151

This two excerpts from the aforementioned poems clearly indicate this intrinsic strength and are far removed from any glorification of the "socialist way of life" officially accepted as normative in Soviet Ukrainian literature.

Along with the intensified search for a new form of expression and new content, the poets of the sixties showed a great concern for their Ukrainian national heritage and for the future of the Ukrainian people. However, it would not be fair to say that such concern could not be identifiable with some of the poets of the older generations. For example, as early as 1955, disturbed by the possibility of denationalization facing the Ukrainian youth (which at the time were being sent by the thousands to work in other parts of the USSR), Maksym Ryl's'kyi wrote in his poem "Porada":

Мені казав розумний садівник:  
 "Коли ти пересаджуєш ялинку,  
 Відзнач північний і південний бік  
 І так сади: ростиме добре й гілко.  
 Нехай на південь дивиться вона,  
 Як і дивилася - тим самим оком;  
 Тих самих віт хай темна гущина  
 З північним вітром бореться широким.

<sup>151</sup>Bohdan Kravtsiv, "'Velyka vedmedytsya' i 'honchi psy'", Poety chumatskoho shlyakhu, vyd-vo "Biblioteka Sučasnosty No.3", München - 1962, 9.



І ще одно: сади її в гурті;  
 Сама вона, без подруг, не ростиме..."  
 ...Поради є хороші у житті,  
 І я навів не гіршу поміж ними.<sup>152</sup>

This poem was published first in Maksym Ryl's'kyi's book Troyandy i vynohrad in 1957. To show how much similarity there is in two author's approach to the same problem, let us compare the above poem to Lina Kostenko's "Sadzhenets'", published in Vitryla in 1958:

#### САДЖЕНЕЦЬ

Деревце оперилося.  
 Пір'я зелене  
 тріпотіло на радісному гіллі.  
 В листопаді опало...  
 Деревце називалося кленом.  
 Обкопали його,  
 Відірвали його від землі.  
 Повезли-повезли  
 по дорогах труських осінніх.  
 В незнайомі ґрунти  
 посадили в далекій краю...  
 Не зів'яло воно,  
 бо у вузлик міцного коріння  
 на дорогу взяло  
 найріднішу землю свою.<sup>153</sup>

The first poem was written by the leading poet of the first generation of Soviet Ukrainian poets and the second by the leading poet of the fourth generation. Their views are identical, Lina Kostenko's poem actually underlines the meaning of Maksym Ryl's'kyi's "Porada". Her lines are beaming with sincere optimism, her tree survives with the help of native soil.

<sup>152</sup>Maksym Ryl's'kyi, Troyandy i vynohrad, vyd-vo "Radyans'-kyi pys'mennyk", Kiev - 1957, 3.

<sup>153</sup>Lina Kostenko, Vitryla, vyd-vo "Radyans'kyi pys'mennyk", Kiev - 1958, 57.





At the time when the dark clouds of official criticism, this time headed by Nikita Khrushchev himself<sup>154</sup>, were about to fall again on Lina Kostenko and her young followers, a new, courageous voice sounded on the Soviet Ukrainian literary scene. The voice belonged to Vasyl' Symonenko.

<sup>154</sup>On March 8, 1963, during a meeting between Communist Party leaders and the creators of Soviet literature and art, Nikita Khrushchev delivered his policy-making speech which initiated a new series of attacks directed against the poets of the sixties. The entire speech was printed in the two successive issues of Literaturna Ukraina (March 12 and 15, 1963). This policy-making speech was in support of an earlier speech delivered by the Secretary of the Central Committee L.F. Il'ichev during a similar meeting on March 7, 1963.

Supporting L.F. Il'ichev on all major issues Nikita Khrushchev said, among other things: "We are living in such times, that literature and art, as predicted by V.I. Lenin, have become an inseparable part of the common people's interests... The questions, which we are discussing, have a principle meaning for the development of socialist culture, Soviet literature and art in the direction given by the program of the Communist Party... ..unfortunately it so happens that some representatives of art are judging reality by the smell of outhouses... ..wrong tendencies are mainly found in the fact that their entire attention is being subjectively concentrated on deeds of lawlessness, self-will, and misappropriation of power...." He then attacked among others Yevtushenko, Voznysenskii and Ehrenburg. The attacks against the poets of the sixties were promptly followed-up by officials on the local level in the Soviet Ukraine.



## B. Symonenko as a Poet and Spokesman

Symonenko entered Soviet Ukrainian literature as a young poet of bold personality and courageous, fiery verses - an angry rebel with a cause. Another young poet and coeval<sup>155</sup> of Symonenko, Mykola Som reminisces in the forward to the posthumous volume of Symonenko's poetry Zemne tyazhinnya: "After making his debut in literature, Vasyl' Symonenko, gifted with generous talent and incorruptible intellect, started to sing his hearty song loud and clear"<sup>156</sup>. But not for long. Realising the true and revealing nature of Symonenko's poetry, Soviet censorship undertook its usual measures of victimization: refusal to accept Symonenko's works for publication or mutilation of the accepted texts. This fact is well documented by the poet himself in The Diary. His admirers, however, saw to it that his poetry circulated in hand-written manuscripts throughout Ukraine even before the publication of his first volume of poetry Tyscha i hrim in 1962<sup>157</sup>.

A complete collection of Symonenko's poetry is still not available today. A detailed biography of his life and works

<sup>155</sup>Dictionary V, 503.

<sup>156</sup>Mykola Som, "Slovo pro Vasylya Symonenka", Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 3.

<sup>157</sup>"Ukrainian Poet and Rebel: Vasyl Symonenko", The Ukrainian Bulletin (October, 1965), 87.





has yet to be written. This, and the Soviet censorship exercised over Symonenko's works make any serious investigation and/or analysis of his poetry quite difficult. For such reasons, only the poetry published in Symonenko's posthumous book Bereh chekan' in the chapters "The Poetry Mutilated by Soviet Censorship" and "Poetry forbidden in URSR"<sup>158</sup> can be considered as authentic and examined in this dissertation. There are only eighteen poems divided in both chapters and their authenticity has been admitted by at least one Soviet source<sup>159</sup>.

A new volume of Symonenko's poetry just published in the Soviet Ukraine<sup>160</sup> contains two poems hereto listed as "forbidden in the URSR". They are "Samotnist'" and "Ya".

In evaluating poetry, it is customary to accept objectively valid norms deduced from ages of experience and by observation of facts and/or extensive deductive procedures. Such an approach establishes Symonenko as a traditional poet without a trace of the abstractive pettifogery. Tentatively all of the eighteen poems considered here can be divided into three different categories. They could be named respectively as: (1) poetry of angry realism, (2) psychological, deductive poetry, and (3) connotative lyrics. After accepting such categorization

<sup>158</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 137-148 and 151-167.

<sup>159</sup>Mykola Nehoda, "Everest pidlosti", Radyans'ka Ukraina (April 15, 1965), 3.

<sup>160</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Poezii, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1966.



it must be observed that some of the poems contain all or more than one of the above categories.

As an example for "poetry of angry realism" let us consider Symonenko's "Granitni obelisky...", first in the chapter "Poetry Mutilated by Soviet Censorship":

\* \* \*

Гранітні обеліски, як медузи,  
Повзли, повзли і вибилися з сил.  
На цвинтарі розстріляних ілюзій  
Уже немає місця для могил.

Мільярди вір - зариті у чорнозем,  
Мільярди щастя - розвіяні упрах...  
Душа горить, палає лютий розум,  
І ненависть регоче на вітрах.

Коли б усі одурені прозріли,  
Коли б усі убиті ожили,  
То небо, від прокльонів посіріле,  
Напевне б репнуло від сорому й хули.

Тремтять, убивці, думайте, лакузи,  
Життя не наліза на ваш копил.  
Ви чуєте? - На цвинтарі ілюзій  
Уже немає місця для могил.

Уже народ - одна суцільна рана,  
Уже від крові хижіє земля,  
І кожного катюгу і тирана  
Уже чекає зсукана петля.

Розтерзані, зацьковані, убиті  
Підводяться і йдуть чинити суд.  
І їх прокльони, злі й несамовиті,  
Впадуть на душі плісняві і ситі,  
І загойдають дерева на вітті  
Апостолів злочинства і облуд.<sup>161</sup>

In an attempt to distort the meaning behind this poem Soviet censorship named it "Prorotstvo 17-ho roku"<sup>162</sup> and added

<sup>161</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 137-138.

<sup>162</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 15.





the following two lines to the ending:

І встане правда і любов на світі,  
І на сторожі правди стане труд.<sup>163</sup>

It would be hard to accept such two lines as written by Symonenko. A poet, critical in most of his poetry about contemporary labour problems in the Soviet Ukraine, could not possibly aim to fortell the victory of "labour", taking for a starting point a year eighteen years prior to his own birthdate. Symonenko was a contemporary poet concerned with contemporary problems, and "Granitni obelisky..." must be viewed as an angry description of the present social status of the Soviet Ukrainian people. As Anathole W. Bedriy had observed: "Vasyl' Symonenko presented in his poetry and in his diary the whole panorama of the life, conditions, endeavours, attitudes, and struggles of the Ukrainian nation during the last two decades. His work can be called the testimony and picture of the Ukraine of this period". And then: "Vasyl Symonenko was a typical Ukrainian individualist"<sup>164</sup>.

A similar observation is offered by a German article about Vasyl' Symonenko's poetry in Rheinische Merkur (May 15, 1965), 4: "Ein leidenschaftlicher, ja geradezu revolutionärer Hass flammt aus jenen Gedichten Symonenkos, in denen er die Ausbeutung und Erniedrigung durch das bolschewistische Regime mit Spott und Fluch geisselt". This statement is further

<sup>163</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 16.

<sup>164</sup>Anathole W. Bedriy, "Vasyl Symonenko (1935-1963). Trubadour of Ukraine's Freedom", ABN Correspondence (January-February, 1966), 6.









Хай мовчать Америки й Росії,  
Коли я з тобою говорю.

Одійдіте недруги лукаві!  
 Друзі, зачекайте на путі!  
 Маю я святе синівське право  
 З матір'ю побуть насамоті.

Рідко, нене, згадую про тебе,  
Дні занадто куці та малі.  
Ще не всі чорти живуть на небі  
Ходить їх добіса по землі.

Бачиш, з ними щогодини б'юся,  
Чуєш - битви споконвічний грук!  
Як же я без друзів обійдуся,  
Без лобів їх, без очей і рук?

Україно, ти моя молитва,  
Ти моя розпука вікова...  
Громотить над світом люта битва  
За твоє життя, твої права.

Хай палають хмари бурякові,  
 Хай сичать образи - все одно  
 Я проллюся крапелькою крові  
 На твоє священне знамено.<sup>166</sup>

The lines omitted by Soviet censorship for obvious reasons are underlined. However an error in a volume released in the Soviet Ukraine supports and proves the fact that Soviet censorship, indeed, was applied.

In Zemne tyazhinnya we find:

Я проллюся крапелькою крові  
 На твоє червоне знамено.<sup>167</sup>

while in Poezii, Soviet edition of 1966, all omissions are indicated by lines of periods, and we read:

Я проллюся крапелькою крові  
 На твоє священне знамено.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>166</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 146-147.

<sup>167</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Zemne tyazhinnya, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1964, 66.

<sup>168</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Poezii, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev - 1966, 96.



A laboratory analyst would be helpless in trying to find meaning in the case stated above; he would simply reject the issue as irrelevant. Being a victim of his trade, he would choose to involve himself with the mechanical task of establishing the way by which the poet said all he had to say - he would disregard the question: What did the poet say? The moral, political, personal, generally humane views of the poet, the fact that censorship was applied - do not matter. A laboratory analyst does not really care what is it that he analyses. It could be a dog, a guinny pig, or a literary text; he is concerned with classification and not with the revelation of his subject.

Symonenko did not classify - he revealed the reality that surrounded him with anger and dismay. In his poem "Brama" he is concerned with the preordained destiny of anybody having the courage to disagree:

Дикими, незнаними речами  
Марить брама у тривожнім сні,  
Де сторожа брязкає ключами  
І скриплять ворота захисні.  
  
Привиди з кривавими мечами,  
У накидках чорних, ніби ніч,  
Граються безформними м'ячами -  
Головами, знесеними з пліч.  
  
Кров стіка під флегматичні мури,  
Зойки захололі на губах,  
Сотні літ наруги і тортури  
Мертвих повертають у гробах.  
  
Та не бачить місто в ніч похмуру,  
Як сторожа, вже не при мечах,  
Нову жертву кидає під мури  
З тряпкою брудною на очах.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>169</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 156.





In "Balyada pro zaishloho cholovika"<sup>170</sup> Symonenko exposes those making futile promises to the Soviet Ukrainian people as physical "castrates", unable to fulfill what they promise. This, and the poem "Kurds'komu bratovi", where Symonenko clearly states:

.....  
 О, курде, бережи свої набої,  
 Але життя убивців не щади!  
 На байстрюків свавілля і розбою  
 Кривавим смерчем, бурею впади!  
 Веди із ними кулями розмову,  
 Вони прийшли не тільки за добром:  
 Прийшли забрати ім'я твоє, мову,  
 Пустити твого сина байстрюком.  
 З гнобителем не житимеш у згоді:  
 Йому - панять, тобі - тягнути віз!  
 Жиріє з крови змучених народів  
 Наш ворог найлютіший - шовінізм.<sup>171</sup>  
 .....

These lines are addressed above all to human justice and dignity on the international level.

Symonenko places a great deal of confidence behind every word in his poetry. Every line voices resistance against any form of oppression the presence of which in the Soviet Ukraine has become an obsession with the young poet. Symonenko apologizes to no one, he protests angrily against every injustice he has ever encountered.

Being a realist, but a realist not afraid to voice the true state of affairs in the Soviet Ukraine instead of wishful thinking, Symonenko's poetry often turns for aid to psychology and becomes deductive. The best example of his psychological

<sup>170</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München - 1965, 157-158.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 159-160.



deductive thinking is found in one of the poems in the chapter "Poetry Mutilated by Soviet Censorship". Again Soviet censorship is indicated by underlining the omitted lines:

Є тисячі доріг, мільйон вузьких стежинок,  
Є тисячі ланів, але один лиш мій.  
І що мені робить, коли малий зажинок  
Судилося почать на ниві нерясній?

Чи викинути серп і йти байдикувати,  
Чи долю проклясти за лютий недорід  
І до сусід пристать наймитувати  
За пару постолів і шкварку на обід?

Коли б я міг забуть убоге рідне поле,  
За шмат ції землі мені б усе дали...  
До того ж і стерня ніколи ніг не коле  
Тим, хто взува холуйські постолі.

Та мушу я іти на рідне поле босим,  
І мучити себе й ледачого серпа,  
І падати з утоми на покоси,  
І спать, обнявши власного снопа.

Бо нива це – моя! Тут я почну зажинок,  
Бо кращий урожай не жде мене ніде,  
Бо тисяча доріг, мільйон вузьких стежинок  
Мене на ниву батьківську веде...<sup>172</sup>

Here, in a series of comparisons, questions, and answers Symonenko shows the reason why he had selected his own little plot of land. He arrives to a decision by psychological, deductive thinking. This poem, censored, was first printed in Zmina (August, 1964) on page 10 and now, also censored but indicating the omitted stanza by a dotted line, it appears in the newly released posthumous volume<sup>173</sup>. The omission, likewise, was indicated in Zmina.

<sup>172</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Bereh chekan', vyd-vo "Prolog", München – 1965, 148.

<sup>173</sup>Vasyl' Symonenko, Poezii, vyd-vo "Molod'", Kiev – 1966, 185.





The reasons for Soviet censorship of Symonenko's poetry are obvious. Symonenko died in the prime of his youth, he had fully and conscientiously realized his near end and therefore his voice sounded loud and clear. He could not compromise in what he had to say, for he had no time to waste. The reaction to his poetry in the Soviet Ukraine was favorable as will be shown in what follows.

Early in January, 1965, Symonenko's books Tyscha i hrim, posthumous Zemne tyazhinnya, and the fairy-tale Podorozh u krainu Navpaky were nominated for the Taras Shevchenko prize by the publishing house "Molod'", the Communist Youth Organization, by the Soviet Ukrainian Writers Union, and the Editorial board of the monthly Zmina. An announcement to this effect appeared in Literaturna Ukraina (January 8, 1965) on the front page. At the same time, early in January, a gathering to commemorate Vasyl' Symonenko took place in Kiev. The evening was opened by Dmytro Pavlychko<sup>174</sup> (1929-) and followed by speeches by A. Perepadya (not listed in the Dictionary and later accused, among others, for smuggling out of the Soviet Ukraine Symonenko's manuscript<sup>175</sup>) and many other young writers, Symonenko's friends, and university colleagues. Symonenko's voice was heard from a tape recorder and his mother was present, having arrived for the occasion earlier, from Cherkasy. A short notation about

<sup>174</sup>Dictionary V, 232-237.

<sup>175</sup>Perepadya's name is mentioned by Symonenko's mother (Hanna Shcherban') in a letter which was printed in Radyans'ka Ukraina (April 15, 1965), 3.



that evening appeared in Literaturna Ukraina (January 22, 1965), on page 2.

After this a series of voices were heard approving Symonenko's nomination for the Taras Shevchenko annual Prize. "The fairy tale A Journey into Upsidedown Land together with his books Quietness and Thunder and Earth's Gravity is nominated for the Taras Shevchenko Prize in 1965. We believe that it is worthy of such high distinction. The books Quietness and Thunder and Earth's Gravity have earned equal praise"<sup>176</sup>. "I have met this book of poetry as one meets a long missed friend"<sup>177</sup> - wrote one reader enthusiastically about Symonenko's Zemne tyazhinnya. "I am taking into my hands Symonenko's first book Quietness and Thunder and I cannot believe that he is among us no more. No! He is with us. His exciting poetry remains..."<sup>178</sup>. "Vasyl' Symonenko...Earth's Gravity. I have read it. I remain a captive of his grounded poetry. How one wishes to cry when reading these magnificent lines"<sup>179</sup>.

However, the Taras Shevchenko Prize was not granted to Symonenko posthumously. Mykola Bazhan collected the laurels for his poem "Polit kriz' buryu"<sup>180</sup>. It could be suspected that

<sup>176</sup>Vadym Skomorovs'kyi, "Nadzvychna mandrivka", Literaturna Ukraina (February 5, 1965), 3.

<sup>177</sup>Stanislav Shumyts'kyi, "Ostrov", Literaturna Ukraina (February 23, 1965), 3.

<sup>178</sup>Leonid Khodzits'kyi, "Samobutna poeziya", Literaturna Ukraina (March 2, 1965), 2.

<sup>179</sup>Mykhailo Ternavs'kyi, "Treba velykomu but'", Literaturna Ukraina (March 2, 1965)

<sup>180</sup>"Announcement", Literaturna Ukraina (March 9, 1965), 1.





the most probable reason for Symonenko's works failing to receive the Taras Shevchenko Prize was the publication of his clandestine poetry and The Diary abroad<sup>181</sup>.

The presentation of Symonenko and his background in this dissertation only scratches the surface of the fact that such a poet, born and raised within the Soviet system did exist, and did say what was necessary as a Ukrainian living within the Soviet reality. Three years after his untimely death his works continue to appear in the Soviet Ukraine and abroad and this fact leaves room for hope that some day complete, original and unabused works of Vasyl' Symonenko will become available for a serious analysis.

One other matter must be attended to. It was mentioned that Symonenko's poetry contained as well elements of connotative lyrics. To illustrate this point some of the author's translations of Symonenko's poetry are included in an appendix to this dissertation. These, unlike the poetry discussed in this chapter, I have selected from all the material available on Vasyl' Symonenko today.

<sup>181</sup>Clandestine poetry and The Diary were first published in Sučasnist' (January, 1965), 3-18.



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## AN ERROR

Not just people err, thus,  
Even saints sometimes miss.  
Remember that Jesus from Judas  
Had in life his last kiss.

We're no saints and no gods,  
                    meaning only -  
It won't pay to rejoice without cause.  
But if errors you make  
Only enemies notice, -  
You've got no friends, of course!

<sup>182</sup>Contains translation of Symonenko's works by the author of this dissertation.



## A DROP IN THE SEA

There are laws in the World's set-up,  
I will remind you of one:  
So that sea wouldn't dry up,  
You need plenty of drops around.

But then, when a storm is heeded,  
And the sea all with anger pours,  
Only one extra drop is needed -  
And it breaks from its shores.





\* \* \*

Carry me, my happy feelings,  
    on your speedy wings,  
Where a sunny rill is beaming  
    by the hills and things.  
Where the houses stand in dresses,  
    white, like newly clad,  
Native houses, clean and dear,  
    that hops by windows had.  
Where young girls, daydreaming, happy,  
    walk to cooling wells,  
Where, like silk, green pastures flourish,  
    and by cornfields swell.  
Where myself, a pinkish wonder,  
    with a twig in hand, -  
Grabs a mad and hollow gander,  
    grabs me where I stand.  
Bless me, here, my good old fortune,  
    stubborn, squemish-louder, -  
On this land my life to finish,  
    yes, to die just near here.



\* \* \*

They're triumphant:  
He was not mistaken,  
Never once, -  
Not yet -  
Did he soak his shoes,  
And against the wind -  
Not once did he ever -  
Venture...  
And yet neither did he go anywhere!





## WARNING TO A GLORYSEEKER

Into the gloom wil pass the vile and hoary,  
And toadiness will flow into the past,  
And never will a man experience glory,  
Who just for glory lives and does his best.



\* \* \*

Do you know - you're a human, and lonely,  
Do you know about that or not?  
Your smile must be - the only,  
Your tortures must be - the only,  
And your eyes on a steady spot.

Won't remain after you, not a ripple,  
Tomorrow on this earth, my lad,  
Other will walk around people,  
Other will love around people -  
Good, overtender, and bad.

Today - for you all must be steady:  
Lakes, woods, steppes hiss.  
And living must speed and be ready,  
And loving must rush and be ready,  
Look out, do not miss.

You're a human on earth and lonely,  
And either you want so, or not -  
Your smile must be - the only,  
And tortures must be - the only,  
And your eyes on a steady spot.





\* \* \*

Why always be pompous and swagger,  
Warm up with praises?  
Fame is no strife:  
Not enough, oneself, great to imagine,  
You must be great in life.



## GRANDDAD DIED

That is all.

They have burried old, ancient granddad  
and forever have spaded him into the ground.  
Now he will not get up  
to stroll gay in the morning,  
with a scythe to the steep mountainside.  
He won't sharpen the scythe  
to awaken the silence,  
nor will gaze to the sky and see the stars  
disappear.

Only crops will moarn after him with  
some dewdrops,  
and the ages will quietly pass over him.

That is all.

They have burried a good old person,  
they have returned him forever to  
the bossom of earth.

Really, though,  
could it be that in a tight little casket  
all his worries were fitted,  
his hopes,  
his complaints?

Could it be  
that for him, from today on, all is equal?  
Will there ever be sunshine,  
or just night float above?

In my soul - pain - like a serpent is  
creeping,  
sorrow spreads through my chest with  
a growl.

I am ready -  
to believe in the kingdom of heaven,  
for I don't wish at all,  
that into the earth should pass without trace  
all the nameless,  
the saints,  
incomparably pretty -  
the proudest children of earth,  
the truest children of sweat.  
Shall the springtimes blow up  
our planet above us,  
shall the grass burst to light,  
through the old, rotten leaves...





No, I do not believe,  
that my granddad will rise from his grave,  
but I know,  
yes, I know  
that he will not entirely die.  
His uncunning old thoughts  
will be thought by his grandsons,  
and for ages to come their eyes will burn  
with his passions and rages,  
with his glory and tortures  
which in dying, the old man  
to the living has passed.



## A BLACK HORSESHOE

The clouds were creeping so low that people suddenly seemed to appear out of them only to fade away just as abruptly. The girl raised up her head, as if wanting to pierce the foggy gloom. With her long eyelashes she touched the cloud-corners, her eyes were the only blue spots in the pre-storm gray.

- I do not love you, - she said, looking into the sky. - You have lied to me...

- I did not lie to you...

- You did not love me.

He was looking at the ground and did not see what was happening above.

- I do love you, - the boy nervously scraped a little green hump with his shoe, and knocked out the impression of a black horseshoe in it. - I do love you...

- You're simply affraid to lose me, to be left alone.

- Nonsense! - his temper rose sharply. - If I have become indifferent for you, then...

Her eyes flashed at him like two blue bolts of lightning.

- Why are you looking at the ground all the time?

He lifted up his eyes as if they were two cannonballs and glanced at her, but seconds later they fell back to the grass.

- It does not matter where I look.

- You never look directly at me. You always were avid and impatient, - she was shooting down his doubts. - You did not wish to share happiness with me, you simply wanted to bestow happiness upon me.

All of a sudden she began to cry, and it took much effort not to fall into his arms.

- I also would like to make at least one person happy, - she angrily stamped her hill into the soft ground and ran.

- Wait, - he started after her.

The thunder let out a sporadical cough and large, hail-like raindrops started to punish the leaves. The clouds released the two of them. They held hands and ran directly for the cover of a maple tree. They stopped out of breath and wet, happy that they have found such a thick crown of maple.

Look, a horseshoe - shouted the boy.

They bent over the black arc soldered into the green craziness. Unintentionally their eyes met, then their hands, and lips.

- Finding a horseshoe means happiness, - whispered her lips.

Those who find horseshoes never think about those who lose them.



















